

To: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Human Rights Treaties Division (HRTD)
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Information submitted for consideration to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its adoption of a list of issues regarding the Sixth Periodical Report of the Republic of Macedonia under the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 71 Pre-Sessional Working Group, 12-16 March, 2018

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1. SUBMITTING ORGANISATION

Reactor – Research in Action is an independent think-tank based in Skopje, Macedonia. Reactor is committed to facilitating Macedonia's EU integration process by providing timely and relevant research, proposing evidence-based policy alternatives and actively working with citizens, civil society organizations and the policy community. Gender equality is one of the three areas where its research is focused, with specific attention on women's participation, inclusion and economic integration, as well as violence against women.

2. SUMMARY

We have prepared this brief to supplement the information available to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in the adoption of a list of issues for the consideration of the reports of Republic of Macedonia on its implementation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with the aim of highlighting issues in regard to the application of Article 7, 8 and 11 of of the Convention.

In particular, we provide additional information on the following issues including:

- I. The lack of representative participation of women in public life and decision-making at all levels, particularly in high-ranking positions in national and local government that are not regulated with quotas, such as ministerial positions and mayoral positions.
- II. The disadvantaged position of women in the Macedonian economy – specifically the persistently high rates of economic inactivity among women on the labor market, the lack of targeted policies to improve the status of women on the labor market, as well as the limited options for affordable and quality childcare. Information will also be provided in relation to changes in the Minimum Wage Legislation, and how this is expected to affect women employed in the low-wage industries (textile, leather and garment manufacturing sectors).
- III. This document will provide information on the legislative framework set in place with the goal of advancing gender equality, which includes relevant laws and strategies. Furthermore, this document includes information on the insufficient allocation of financial, human and technical resources for the implementation of mandatory legislative requirements that are established with the existing legislation. Finally, we provide information regarding the inclusion of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the drafting and implementation of strategic documents related to gender equality.

We agree that this information can be posted on the CEDAW website.

I. Participation of women in public life

2. Lack of political participation of women on all levels persists regardless of the changes in local and national governments that occurred in 2017. Where participation is ensured with gender quotas, it remains at around one third (for example, participation of women in Parliament is at 36%, as the recent amendment to electoral legislation increased the quota for the electoral lists to 40%, on a complex “zipper model”). However, participation of women in parliamentary bodies was and still remains limited. In particular, women are mostly members of parliamentary bodies and committees relating to health, education and equal opportunities and lack participation in bodies concerning defence and security. At present in the parliamentary commission for defence and security, only 2 of the 12 members are women, and in the commission for economic affairs only 3 of the 9 members are women¹. In contrast, in the commission for equal opportunities for women and men, only 2 of the 10 members are men, indicating that women dominate in bodies dealing with advancing women’s rights and gender equality in the country, but are notably excluded from key reform sectors.
3. Women continue to be underrepresented in key decision-making positions including ministerial positions. This is the case for both the previous and current government. Within the previous government, there were only three women ministers out of 22 (14%). In the newly established government, this number is 4 out of 25 ministerial positions (16%)². Furthermore, if the first wave of staffing for the new government is an indicator, women are significantly underrepresented in all government bodies (at one point, of 68 newly appointed state positions³ only 8 (11%) were women). Even though the current government included gender equality as a strategic priority in its election campaign, and the new Prime Minister has publically stated that gender equality is the government’s priority, this is not currently reflected in government appointed positions.
4. From 2013 to 2017 only 4 of 81 municipalities were governed by women. In the local elections of 2017, the number of women mayors increased to six. Although this is an improvement, it is still only 7% of the total number of municipalities where the mayor is a woman. Drawing on the Committee’s concern that women, including women from ethnic minorities, continue to be underrepresented in ministerial positions, in high-ranking posts in the diplomatic service, at the municipal level and in mayoral positions, it can be concluded that no temporary special measures or other proactive and sustained measures have been introduced to promote and increase such representation and address systematic barriers such as negative gender stereotypes which impede women’s equal participation in decision-making.

¹Assembly of Republic of Macedonia (2017). Working bodies 2017-2020 – Available at <https://www.sobranie.mk/working-bodies-2016-2020-en.nspix>

²Government of Republic of Macedonia - <http://vlada.mk/vlada>

³Appointed State Positions refers to the state officials and directors of state institutions and agencies.

II. Employment

5. Low economic participation rates remain high. In 2016, 56.2% of working age women remained economically inactive, making up 64.6% of the total economically inactive population in the country⁴. The economic inactivity rates remain consistently high among women even as older generations (where gaps between men and women are more pronounced) are aging out of the labor market and women's qualifications have reached and surpassed educational attainment among men - at present 31.5% of women have completed university level education, whereas this is the case with only 17.5% of men in the working age population⁵. Despite the fact that many government documents attribute traditional attitudes for the lack of women's participation of the labor market, this claim is not evidence based. Research has shown that discrimination on the labor market, lack of policies to reconcile work and family life, lack (and cost) of care and child care facilities all contribute towards the high economic inactivity rates of women⁶.
6. Economically inactive women have continually been excluded from active employment measures introduced by the Agency for Employment. Specifically, measures targeted women who are registered unemployed and seeking for work, excluding women who are not registered with the agency, but who could benefit from these programs. Research has shown that many economically inactive women are not registered as unemployed because they are discouraged and not because they are unwilling to work. Moreover, there have been no systematic measures or policies to integrate economically inactive women on the labor market.
7. In Macedonia there are 81 municipalities and of those only 54 municipalities have child care centers (both public and private)⁷. This means that 33% of municipalities in the country do not have facilities for childcare. In 2015 coverage in institutions for care and education of children was only 18.53%, one of the worst child care coverage rates in Europe⁸. According to the official data, almost 100% of those who leave paid employment to care for children or the elderly are women⁹.
8. Shared parental leave is still not introduced in Macedonian legislation. At present, maternity leave can only be transferred to fathers if the mother is not able to use it.

⁴ State Statistical Office (2016). Labor Force Survey – Available at <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.17.02.pdf>

⁵ State Statistical Office (2016). Labor Force Survey – Available at <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.17.02.pdf>

⁶ Reactor – Research in Action (2016). Finding the key to the glass door: Demystifying the reasons for women's low participation in the labor market – Available at <http://www.reactor.org.mk/CMS/Files/Publications/Documents/EN%20VERZIJA3.pdf>

⁷ State Statistical Office (2016). Institutions for care and education of children – kindergartens – centers for early childhood developments. Available at <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.17.03.pdf>

⁸ State Statistical Office (2015). Institutions for care and education of children – kindergartens – centers for early childhood developments. Available at <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.16.01.pdf>

⁹ State Statistical Office (2016). Labor Force Survey – Available at <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.17.02.pdf>

9. The gender pay gap continues to exist in the country and no concrete measures have been introduced to address it. According to research, the gender pay gap in the country varies between 13% and 18%¹⁰.
10. Changes were introduced to the Minimal Wage Legislation in 2017, and while we welcome the inclusion of the textile, leather and garment industries that were excluded as exemptions from previous versions of the legislation, these changes do not go far enough to protect textile industry workers, where 82% of the employees are women¹¹. Namely, the changes which introduced a norm¹² for obtaining a minimal wage are open for manipulation, abuse and pressure from the employers, as suggested by the union for industry, energy and mining¹³. The textile industry has approximately 9% union membership¹⁴ and high levels of unregistered workers,¹⁵ which leaves employees (mostly women) without the minimal wage and without the power to negotiate higher wages and safety and protection at the workplace.

III. Legislative Framework

11. The Law for Equal Opportunities sets out legislative requirements to promote and advance gender equality. The Strategy for Gender Equality (2013 – 2020) and National Action Plan (2013 -2016), along with the annual operational plan, provided a roadmap for activities and measures to be implemented over the 4 year period that would have a transformative effect on promoting women's rights. However, the ambitious plan was not matched with adequate funding: the state did not allocate any funding for the implementation of the NAP in 2013 and 2014, and only approximately €15.000 for 2015 and 2016, which is an insufficient amount for the implementation of all the planned activities in the Strategy and National Action Plan.
12. In both 2013 and 2014, almost half of the activities in the National Action plan were not started while the overall level of implementation was at 15% and 21% respectively.¹⁶ In 2015 and 2016 the overall implementation of activities was only 13%.
13. An ongoing issue is the lack of financial, technical and human resources allocated to the Sector for Equal Opportunities in the Ministry of Labor and Social policy, which is the institution responsible for implementation of the Strategy for Gender Equality and National Action Plans. This has resulted in noncompliance with the strategic and operative documents for gender

¹⁰ Kazandziska, M. et al. (2012), "The gender pay gap in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", ILO and <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetail?title=&id=acf5c17e-cafe-46d9-b299-b02f43900d2f>

¹¹ State Statistical Office, Employees and net wages - <http://goo.gl/liymr>

¹² The norm refers to producing a set number of product before the minimal wage can be obtained. An example is sawing 20 shirts per day in order to receive the minimal wage.

¹³ <http://24vesti.mk/so-termi-not-normiran-uchinok-teshko-do-minimalna-plata>

¹⁴ Kazandziska, M. et al. (2012), "The gender pay gap in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", ILO,

¹⁵ Fair Wear Foundation (2010) Country Report FYRM.(2010) - <http://goo.gl/5LI9iG>

¹⁶ Reactor – Research in action (2015). Shadow report on the implementation of Gender equality strategy and action plan, 2014.

equality; lack of cross institutional coordination and the absence of a methodology for monitoring the implementation of the strategy and the action plan.

14. Prior to 2017, a new National Action Plan for 2017 – 2020 was to be produced by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy with cooperation from Civil Society and other relevant stakeholders. However, this process was delayed and it was first initiated in May 2017, with minimal inclusion of CSOs. The process was delayed yet again, until November 2017, where a new draft National Action Plan was created with the assistance of CSOs. However, the time for creating a draft Action Plan was brief and the plan itself was not based on an evaluation of the previous Action Plan.

15. According to the Law for Equal Opportunities, a legal representative should be employed within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy to deal with complaints of gender-based discrimination. However, this legal requirement has not been fulfilled in the last four years. The ministry needs to dedicate adequate financial and human resources in order to fulfil this legislative obligation.

In light of this information, we respectfully invite The Committee to ask the Government of the Republic of Macedonia the following questions:

16. How will the Government ensure equal participation of women in decision making on all levels including ministerial positions, high-ranking posts in the diplomatic service, at the municipal level and in mayoral positions?

17. What measures will the Government provide in the upcoming period (both short- and long-term) to address the high economic inactivity rates among women and to meaningfully include women in the labor market?

18. What is the Government's plan to increase the number of child care facilities in the country, especially in rural areas? Do these plans include improving the quality of care provided in addition to increasing the quantity?

19. What steps will the government take to introduce shared parental leave, in order to decrease discrimination of women on the labor market and also to promote shared parental responsibilities and tackle stereotypes of traditional gender roles?

20. How will the Government monitor and measure the success of the adopted laws, documents and strategic documents on equal opportunities (Strategy for Gender Equality and National Action Plan)?

21. What steps will the Government take to ensure that there is enough human, financial and technical resources to timely implement strategic documents to promote and advance women's rights?

22. When does the Government plan to appoint a legal representative to deal with complaints about gender based discrimination and what resources will be made available to her?