



NORTH MACEDONIA

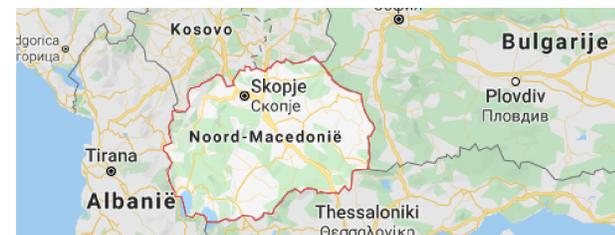
North Macedonia (pop.2 million), located in the South-East of Europe, is an upper-middle income economy (DAC). Since its independence in 1991, the country has set about establishing a parliamentary democracy, a market economy and aspires to become a member of the European Union (EU). Despite substantial advancement in meeting the requirements for accession, this ambition has been foiled by a long-running dispute over the country's name. The European Commission (EC) has recommended opening accession negotiations for six years running, with a seventh recommendation extended conditionally in 2015, but the crucial green light has always been withheld. While public support for European integration is still strong, the prolonged impasse threatens to slow the pace of EU-mandated reforms.

According to the most recent census (2002), ethnic North Macedonians account for 64.2 per cent of the population, ethnic Albanians 25.2 per cent, and other ethnic groups 10.6 per cent.

The country escaped the large-scale armed conflict that accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s but faced violence along ethnic lines in 2001. A six-month conflict was halted thanks to the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), which pledged expanded rights for minorities and the decentralization of public services. Although ethnic Albanian parties are represented by rule in government coalitions, frictions between the two main ethnic communities persist. Since 2001, the country has enjoyed broad stability, although recent political polarization has caused

uncertainty and raised concerns on human rights.

The Gross National Income (GNI) per head has doubled since independence to reach USD 5,450 in 2018, and the country now belongs to the group of high-middle-income economies. Growth has been robust in recent years, driven by foreign direct investment, strong exports and large-scale government-funded infrastructure projects [1]. In 2015, the country ranked 81 of 188 countries in the Human Development Index.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In the last decade, North Macedonia has made progresses regarding gender equality and women's rights. The country ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol in 1994. In 2018, the Council of Europe's (CoE) Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating violence against Women was ratified. Besides this, several laws and mechanisms to advance gender equality had been adopted. The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2012) obliges public institutions to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men, and to mainstream gender into their policies, strategies and budgets, through specific measures to reduce gender inequality.

Despite significant legal changes, gender inequalities and gaps continue to exist across all levels. For example, women make up only 39.5 per cent of the employed.[2]

In March 2019, the Macedonian Parliament adopted a new legislation on abortion, which fully respects women's rights and choice for pregnancy termination. The former restrictive law, adopted in 2013, has been replaced after six years of a continuous fight led by Macedonian CSOs and the change in political environment with the election of a social democrat government in 2017. The new legislation guarantees no more mandatory or biased counselling, and no three-day waiting period. Any information provided to those asking for an abortion has to be objective and evidence-based (according to WHO standards). Moreover, pregnant people will now have the right to refuse any abortion-related information under the law on patients' rights. Abortion on request has been extended from 10 to 12 weeks of gestation.

Domestic and gender-based violence remains a crucial issue in North Macedonia.

Women are disproportionately affected by domestic and gender-based violence: 82 per cent of domestic violence survivors are women, and men receive 93 per cent of domestic violence convictions. There is a strong need for more research and data on gender-based violence.

17.9%

lower salary for women than for men [3]





ACHIEVING THE SDGs

The Agenda2030 for Sustainable Development recognizes and provides a useful universal framework for strengthening the collective action towards common goals and challenges. The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has a National Council for Sustainable Development (2010). This council has reaffirmed the commitment to implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda and emphasized the importance of a consistent integration of the Sustainable Development Goals in the national and local plans. The Government of Macedonia has identified five priority Sustainable Development Goals for for the period 2018–2020: SDG 1 No poverty; SDG4 Quality education; SDG8 Decent work and economic growth; SDG 13 Climate action; SDG16 Peace and justice and strong institutions.

These goals also constitute the priority activities and measures defined in the National Strategy

for Sustainable Development. Parts of the Sustainable Development Goals are already being implemented in some of the policies of the Government. The biggest steps taken were towards the reduction of inequalities behind the principle "leave no one behind". The successful implementation of the social reforms enabled 30,000 households and about 120,000 citizens to receive a higher amount social benefits, an increase of approximately 300 per cent compared to 2016. Support for young people is one the top priorities in North Macedonia. The provision of favourable conditions for upgrading, development, and employment of young people is visible through the operational Plan for Employment. In 2019, 17.0 millions euros had been provided by the Government, and is the highest amount ever allocated for youth employment measures, three times higher than in 2014.



Workshop in Albania



Training on gender equality

WOMEN2030

As part of the Women2030 program, which aims to engage women's rights and gender equality organizations in the process of achieving the SDGs of Agenda 2030, Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) held policy consultations between December 2017 and October 2019. The consultations were held with policy makers, women organizations and CSOs, as well as strategic partners to present how to improve national policies, plans and budgets for SDGs from a gender perspective.

Among the 125 participants were representatives of the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of environmental protection and urban planning, Ministry of Social Protection, Institute for Public Health, international

organisations, civil society, experts, youth and media.

JHR supported the initiatives of 6 local women's rights and gender equality NGOs with subgrants towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. JHR also organized a series of trainings to build the capacity of women's rights on the SDGs with a gender perspective, sharing challenges and best practices on the implementation and monitoring processes.

In addition, trainings on social media were organised for which JHR used the Women2030 Media Training Toolkit translated into Macedonian.



Training for MHM



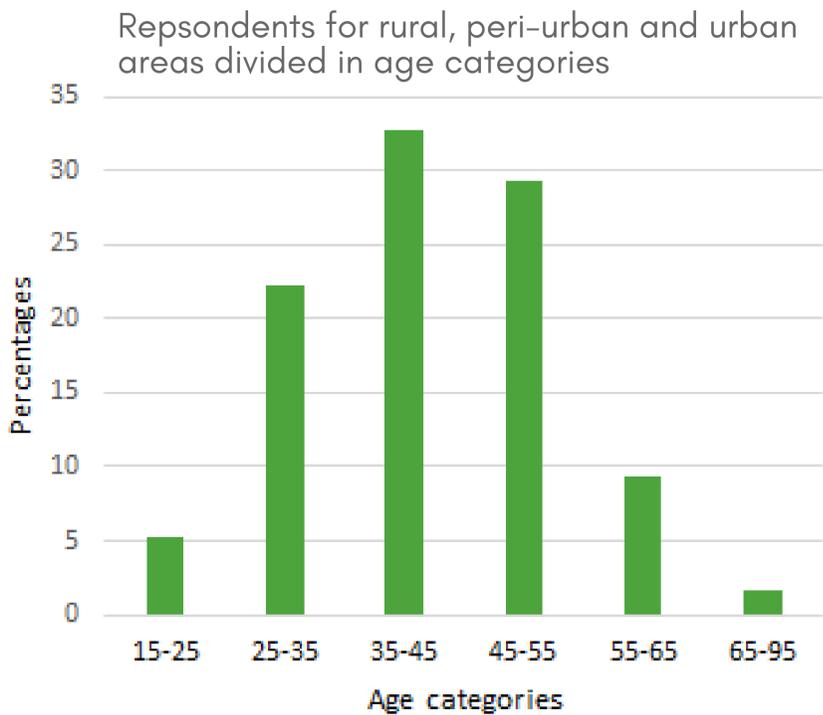
Work with children for raising gender equality in primary school in North Macedonia





DEMOGRAPHIC

In the framework of Women2030, JHR implemented a gender assessment on the implementation of the SDGs, which was used to get more insight into Gender Equality and Climate Action in the Republic of North Macedonia. In total, 250 people were interviewed 202 of which were women and 48 were men. Both interviewed women and men come from rural, peri-urban and urban areas of North Macedonia.



Handcraft made by women - safe toys

43%

of the female respondents in rural areas are unemployed, while 100% of the male respondents in rural areas state to be employed

WATER & SANITATION

In North Macedonia, 97 per cent of the citizens exercise the right to Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation, but there are still citizens who do not have access to drinking water in accordance with European standards. Moreover, only 18 per cent of the population has access to sewage systems. The main issue that they face is access to sanitation in schools, (both in rural and urban areas), with special accent to toilets for Menstrual Health Management (MHM).

The rate of access to safe drinking water for marginalised people in the Skopje region is at an intermediate level. It is noticeable that there is no access to water and sanitation for homeless people and internally displaced people. Only 16 per cent of Roma Residents living in Skopje have

toilets and bathrooms ,while others use toilets outside their homes and only 26 per cent of them have access to water. Also the state of access to water and sanitation for the disabled is at a very low level [4].

The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP) is responsible for policies, strategies and laws, whereas municipalities are responsible for the provision of water services. Water supply is managed by public utilities, founded, established and owned by the municipalities.

93%

of the respondents in rural areas state that girls or daughters do not have decent sanitation and hygiene conditions at school



60-80%

Current level of water supply coverage in rural areas



School toilet in rural area



LIVING CONDITIONS

The respondents of the gender assessment have been asked how satisfied they were with access to water, energy, housing, sanitation and economic independence. In rural areas 27 per cent of the women confess to be dissatisfied with the economic situation which they are in, compared to 5 per cent of women in urban areas that are dissatisfied with their economic situation. In the region of Skopje, there are 25.346 Roma who are registered, this equals 5 per cent of the total population. Of these Roma families, 72 per cent are receiving social assistance.

It is important to underline that almost 15 per cent of North

Macedonia's population, mostly Roman, lives without legal homes. This means that they do not have access to basic services, such as water or electricity, or even an official ID.

In the Skopje region, the municipality of Shuto Orizari has the highest percentage of families living in housing without water and sanitation. According to the latest survey by the NGO InSoC, 95 per cent of Roma families are poor, and therefore have bad water and sanitation facilities [5]. It is expected that the new water and sanitation network and a water tank, which is built at the moment, will solve the issue of access to clean drinking water in Shuto Orizari.

17%

of the female respondents in rural areas are satisfied with their housing situation, in urban areas this is only 2%



12%

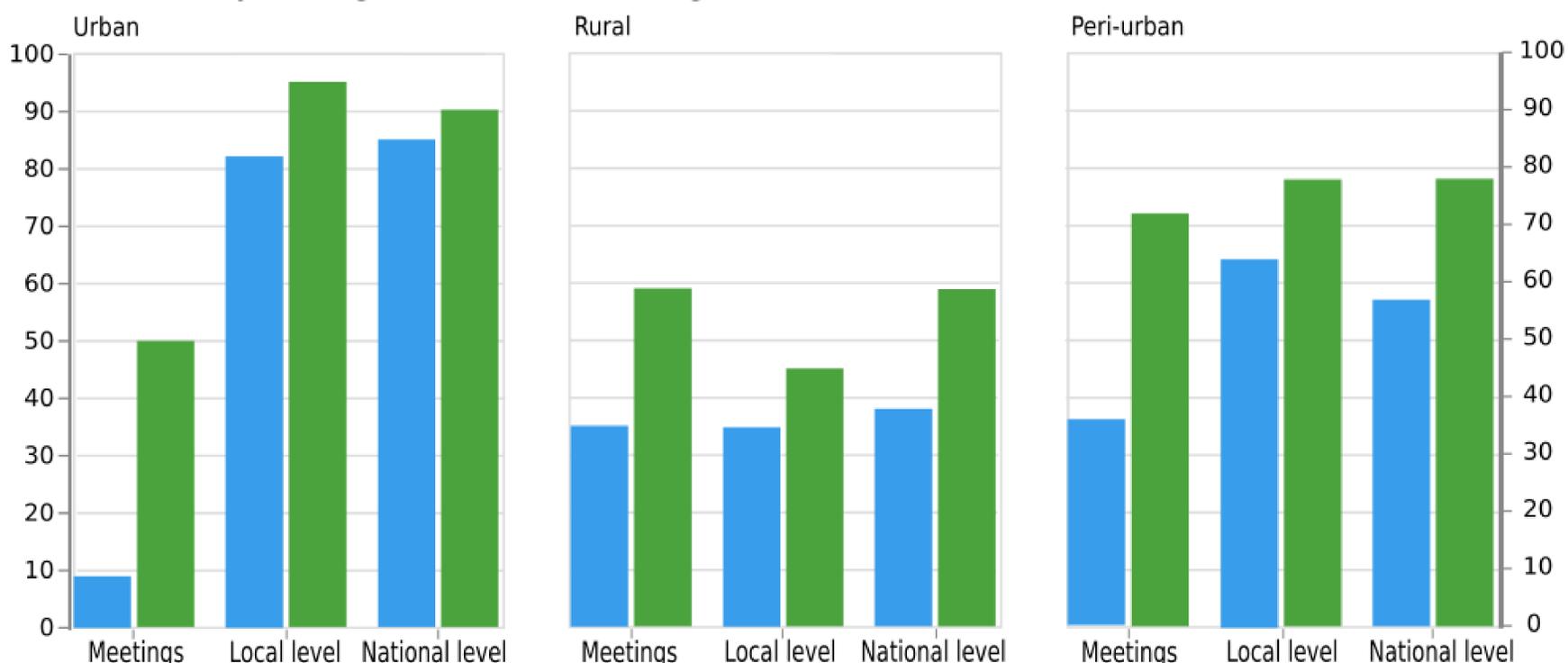
of the female respondents in rural areas are satisfied with the (affordable) energy supply in their region

DECISION-MAKING

Women's participation in decision-making processes is increasing in the Republic of North Macedonia. Starting in 1991, 4 women were elected to the Parliament. In 2019, this number has increased to 48 women, which is 39 per cent of the Parliament members. This is the largest number of women ever in the Macedonian Parliament. Women are more and more included and encouraged to enter in political circles. Courage, legislative changes, and regulations on gender equality and representation make it possible for women to make the composition of parliament as it is nowadays. In 1998 a declaration was adopted for the first time that enabled the increasing participation of women in politics. Before 1998, the participation of women in politics was only 5 per cent. The women who did participate in politics managed to introduce a 30 per cent women's quota, which increased to a 40 per cent quota for women in Parliament in 2015. As a result, the Republic of North Macedonia moved from the bottom of the list of women's representations in politics across the countries in Europe, to a higher position in the ranking of the Gender Equality Index [6].

Survey respondents who expressed a positive opinion on women's participation in community meetings and in decision making at the local and national levels

■ Men ■ Women

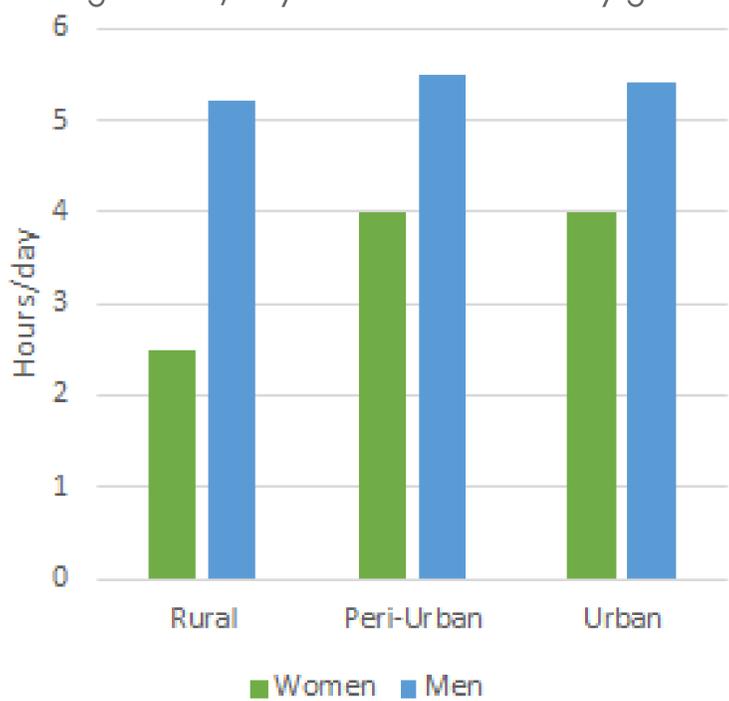




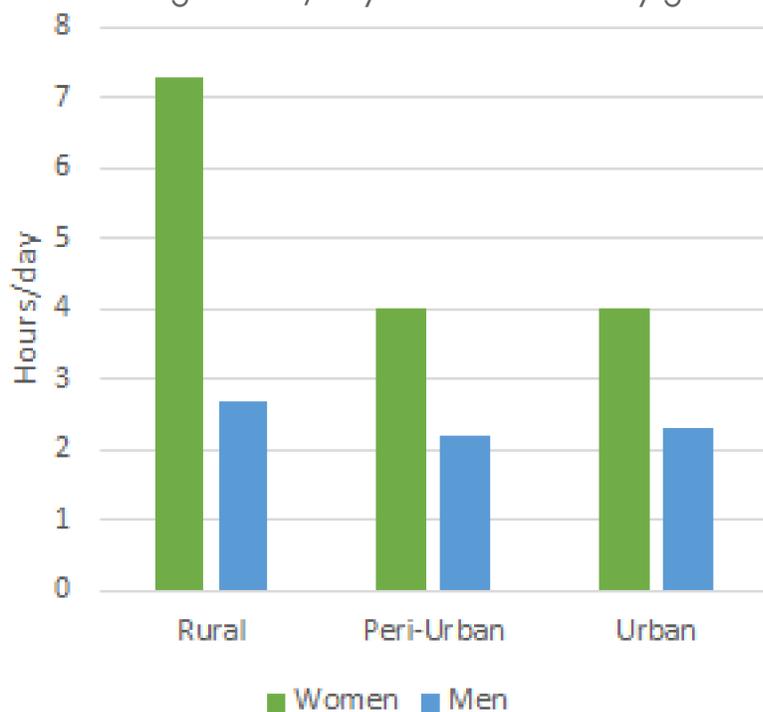
UNPAID CARE WORK

Women in all regions reported spending less time on leisure activities and more time for domestic work compared to men. The gender assessment shows that women in rural areas have 2.7 hours less leisure time and spend 4.6 hours more than men on domestic work on a daily basis. In the urban areas inequalities between women and men are not as high, but still present. Women in urban areas spend 1.7 hours more on domestic work and 1.4 hours less on leisure time than men do. Despite the smaller differences in peri-urban and urban areas, in overall women spend much more time on unpaid care work in the whole of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Average hours/day of domestic work by gender



Average hours/day of leisure time by gender



CONCLUSIONS

In 2006 the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was adopted and established a number of mechanisms in support of the goal to create equal opportunities for women and men. In 2019, Macedonia adopted a new Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. This new law is in line with international human rights standards and the EU non-discrimination directives, as well as the Law on Termination of Pregnancy (2019) that ensures that women have timely access to health care providers. Despite significant legal changes, gender gaps and inequalities continue to exist across all levels of government in North Macedonia.

With support of UN Women and the European Institute for Gender Equality, the country

has developed its first Gender Equality Index, a tool that shows progress achieved towards gender equality in the EU. Compared to EU states, North Macedonia is currently ranked 15th on the index with regard to gender equality.

North Macedonia has adopted numerous laws for gender equality, but it still needs to ensure their full implementation, and achieve equal participation of women and men in all spheres of public life. At the moment, women make up only 39.5 per cent of the employed, earn 17.9 per cent less than men per hour of work, and represent 64.2 per cent of the country's economically inactive population in terms of paid work.



Almost 15% of North Macedonia's population, mostly Roman, lives without legal homes



Training for the use of the Media Guide for journalists involved in Women2030 trainings



Toilet at a school in the rural area of North Macedonia



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Macedonian organisation Journalists for Human Rights has prepared recommendations to further discuss, highlight and improve the position of women in the society. Despite the fact that North Macedonia has made some progress in recent years, still a lot of work needs to be done.

First of all, public policies on gender equality must be mainstreamed in all policy areas with the obligation to implement those policies. In order to do so, the National Council for Sustainable Development must be involved in all fields of policy making. Furthermore, a gender analysis of projects and programmes must be included in all policy-making processes.

Secondly, a holistic and continuous gender balanced campaign must be created in order to strengthen advocacy on gender in all fields of work. This campaign should include trainings for people who influence policy making processes.

Third, women need to have accessibility to all necessities to meet standard living conditions, such as proper sanitary facilities, and clean and affordable water and energy resources. These standard living conditions will improve the position of women to have a better paid job or to finish higher education.

Last but not least, a 50-50 quota should be introduced in the decision-making processes on all political levels to provide women with equal chances in involving them in political debates and represent intersectional perspectives.



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