



STATEMENT BY

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Joint Submission on health to the UN Universal Periodic Review

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Distinguished chair person and Permanent Missions representatives, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you on behalf of Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of women-ESE.

Following the positive practice of monitoring and reporting on human rights to different Human Rights bodies, ESE as initiator of an informal ad hoc coalition comprised of 10 civic organizations with proven expertise on protection of human rights and health right of different marginalized groups, prepared Joint submission on health for the second reporting cycle of R. of Macedonia within the Universal Periodic Review. I would like to stress the relevance of submitted Joint submission, whereby we indicate the problems and recommendations for improvement of the health of eight marginalized groups. Copies of the Joint submission on health are printed and are at your disposal. The addressed statement will cover issues related with health rights of following marginalized groups, which we believe are of utmost priority: **health of Roma people, women, people with intellectual disability and victims of human trafficking**, and my colleague from Coalition for Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities will present the situation of health rights of **LGBT population, drug users, sexual workers, and people living with HIV/AIDS**.

Before I move on to the selected priority issues, let me briefly present the general situation on governmental health related policies, laws and practice since the last review and mid-term governmental report in 2012.

There is a continues trend of producing laws, policies and plans which do not result in making progress regarding the enjoyment and exercising of the health rights. The exercising of the health rights, particularly health rights of the marginalized groups are largely affected by the frequent health care reforms. A new law on health care was adopted in 2012 which terminated the 20 years long validity of the old law. This law was adopted in a shortened legal procedure with only one public hearing and without broader public consultation. The level of awareness among health care providers about their obligations regarding the patient's rights and their own rights in the delivery of health care remains on very unsatisfactory level. Neither patients are aware of their rights in health care settings. Mechanisms for protection of human rights and particularly health rights are poorly developed and utilized by the citizens.

1. The biggest concerns is related to health status of Roma - Recommendation 41 (Algeria, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Mexico and Spain)

Despite the accepted recommendation number 41 for urgent implementation of Strategy for Roma (2005-2015) and National action plan for health, governmental mid- term report does not reflect any positive achievements towards the implementation of this strategic documents, neither reflects on needed budget allocation for this purpose. Roma in Macedonia are facing unfavorable socio-economic and living conditions, accompanied with barriers in the access to health services which contribute towards the less favorable health status of the Roma compared to the majority of the population. In addition, the poor health status of Roma results from non-implementation of the above mentioned policies for promotion of the health of Roma. Roma mothers and children are insufficiently provided with preventive health care, including immunization, health education and

visits by the community nurse service. The coverage of Roma children aged 0 – 6 for different vaccines in different municipalities accounts for 20%- 90%, which is far below from the national average of 95%. Adopted activities that were aimed for improvement of mothers and children health in Roma communities are significantly reduced and not properly implemented. As regarding the situation with reproductive health, gynecological clinics in small urban areas do not exist, especially in the Roma communities and there is inadequate coverage of Roma women with antenatal health care. Many Roma are facing problems in acquiring the right to health insurance as precondition for access to health care. Roma are discriminated against in the exercising of their health rights and it is manifested by denial of health services and low quality of health care.

RECOMMENDATION: The state should introduce procedure for monitoring and reporting about the implementation of measures specified in the National action plan for health and preventive health programs; foresee and implement measures for increased coverage of Roma children and women with preventive health services including vaccination and reproductive health services with adequate budget allocation.

2. With respect to women’s health and health of the victims of human trafficking- Recommendation 15 (Kazakhstan) and 25 (Sweden and Malaysia) and 41(Argentina)

Women are insufficiently covered with health services regarding their reproductive health and antenatal health care. The coverage with chosen gynecologist is even lower among women from rural areas (49%). There is insufficient coverage with antenatal health care for 17% of the women that had less than four medical check-ups during their first pregnancy. There is low rate of usage of contraception by women in the reproductive period and abortion is still used as birth control method especially among married women. In addition, not a single oral hormonal contraceptive is included on the positive list of medicines of the Health insurance fund, i.e. women should pay the full price for the contraceptives. Furthermore, restriction of women’s reproductive rights can also be noted most recently with the new Law on pregnancy termination that was adopted in an expedited procedure and without public consultations, which imposes administrative barriers that particularly limit access to safe abortion for women from marginalized and rural communities. As regarding the **women victims of human trafficking**, it should be mentioned that the state does not provide financial and institutional support for ensuring the health care for the victims of human trafficking.

RECOMMENDATION: The state should introduce measures to enable universal coverage of women with gynecological services in the primary health care and antenatal health care on the whole territory of the country, as well as taking measures for improving the availability of contraception, such as placing the oral hormonal contraceptives on the positive list of medicines of the health insurance fund.

RECOMMENDATION: The state should provide the necessary health care for the victims of human trafficking at all levels of health care.

3. With respect to health of the people with intellectual disability - Recommendation 1 (Turkey, Croatia, Argentina, Mexico and Azerbaijan)

People with intellectual disability above 26 years of age facing limited access to free health care, treatment and medication. Furthermore the Law on health care does not allowing attendant to the person with intellectual disability during their use of hospital care above the 3 years of age. The system for assessing the specific needs of the people with physical and intellectual disability is insufficiently developed and it not includes the list of needs and recommendations for further treatment.

RECOMMENDATION: The state should foresee legal solutions to provide free of charge health care, treatment and medication for all people with intellectual disability without age limitations and based on their inability for independent life and work and to allow attendant to these persons during the hospitalization without any age limitations. The system for assessing the specific needs of the people with physical and intellectual disability should include the list of needs and recommendations for further treatment of this population.

Distinguished chair person and Permanent Mission representatives, I would like to thank you with hope that you will take this into consideration through raising these priority issues on the official 18-th session and propose prepared recommendation to the Republic of Macedonia.