

#### **ABOUT ESE**

ESE is a civil society organization that works to improve the implementation of the social and economic rights of vulnerable groups, by strengthening them, mobilizing and engaging in the planning, implementation and evaluation of public policies and services in the Republic Macedonia.

ESE's driving force is its commitment to resolution of problems. By promoting and improving the human rights, we improve social and economic justice, having in mind that human rights are indivisible collection of standards that should be enjoyed by all. We are particularly divoted to work in the field of promotin and aimprovement of health rights and women rights. Thereforewe are focused on two goals, those being: to address urgent needs of citizens, in particulare the needs of vulnerable groups of citizens, and to influence creation of sustainable and long-term changes. We do much more than documenting, reporting and publicaly condemning injustices in the society. We provide legal and paralegal assistance, allowing citizens to exercise their rights and to change their living conditions. Moreover, we advocate for changes of legislation and policies that affect exercise of health rights and women rights. We advocate at national and international level. We draft and submit "shadow reports" and other types of documents to competent international bodies concerning the degree of implementation of international treaties on human rights.

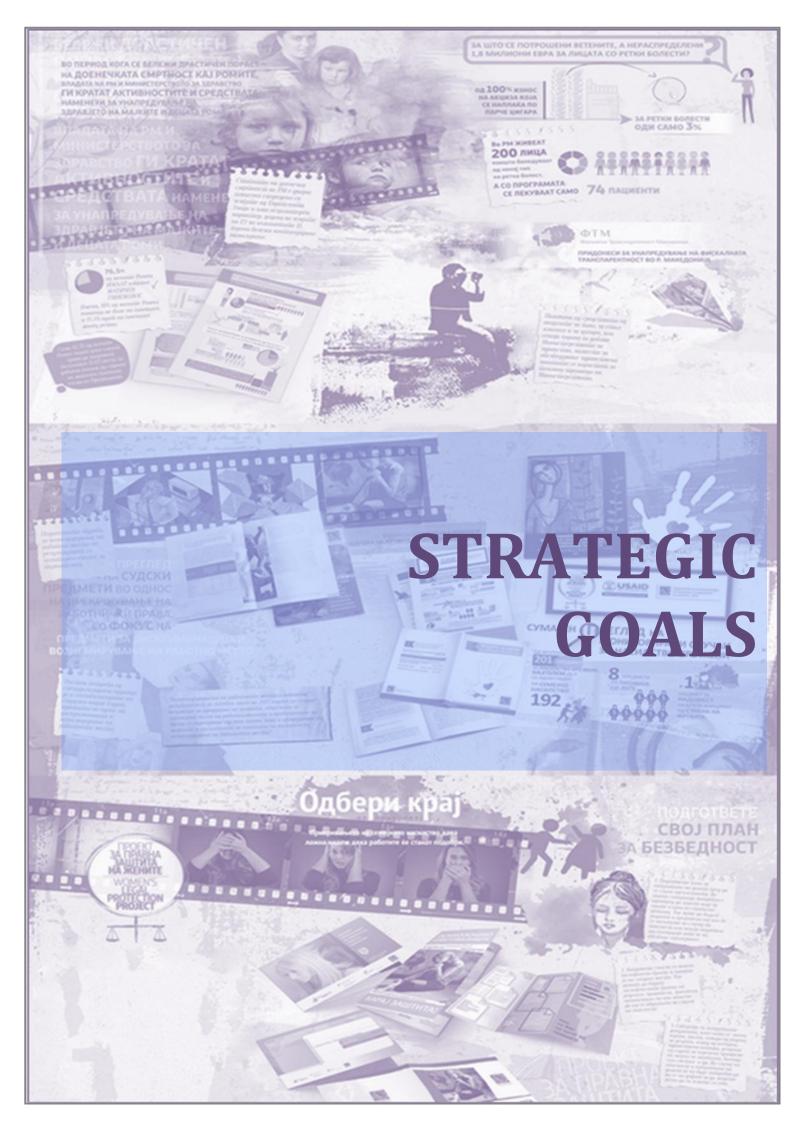
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## The most significant achievements in 2018

- We have doubled the number of CSOs (from three to seven) to which we are
  providing technical support in the implementation of social accountability and
  legal empowerment methodologies in the area of promoting Roma health and
  in the area of women's employability and employment.
- We have increased the number of CSOs from the South East European region to which we are providing training and expert support on the implementation of social accountability and legal empowerment methodologies, as well as our participation in European Roma health promotion initiatives. From two organizations that have traditionally received this type of assistance and support in 2018, we have expended the provision of training and expert support to 18 organizations.
- As a result of our efforts and cooperation, two public institutions will pilot the
  implementation of social accountability methodologies, i.e. the Ministry of
  Health will monitor the implementation of the health programs of the Ministry,
  and the Employment Agency will monitor the implementation of the its
  employment programs and measures.
- We have improved the process of data collect from the Roma communities and increased the scope of activities.
- We have included 826 persons, out of which 407 men and 419 women living in four municipalities across the country, in the process of assessment of the access and delivery of the active employment measures and services provided by the Employment Agency.
- For the second year in a row, we continued to collect data and analyze the costs
  for legal protection and quality of access to justice for women who have
  suffered violence. We have complemented these efforts by collecting and
  analyzing data on the exercise of the right to exemption of the court costs in
  civil court procedures for women who have suffered violence.

- In total 30, i.e. 21 paralegals have strengthened their knowledge in the field of civil and criminal law, civil and criminal court procedure, as well as mechanisms for protection against domestic violence and harassment in the workplace, in order to provide equal access to justice to Roma, sex workers, textile workers and other vulnerable groups of citizens, by providing paralegal assistance and support through two trainings.
- In the course of 2018 the court monitoring was conducted to 226 court hearings related to domestic violence. In addition, we prepared detailed indepth analysis, and conducted case file inspection on 33 completed criminal court cases, in order to improve different aspects from the courts proceeding for provision of adequate and timely court protection to women who suffered domestic violence.
- We provided legal aid to 182 persons, by giving legal advices and preparation of written submissions, and psychological counseling to 51 persons.
- In order to raise public awareness on the importance of fiscal transparency and the need for priority-driven budgeting through campaigning, the right to employment and access to active employment programs and measures, and in general on all areas of ESEs work, we have prepared and shared 1,184 information. Content posted on social media on all three issues has been visited approximately 2.1 million times, while content posted on the three websites has reached 12.5 thousand.
- We have prepared and submitted recommendations to 91 public institutions to improve their reactive and proactive transparency.
- The Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted five recommended measures to promote fiscal transparency and access to information within the Open Government Partnership Action Plan for the period 2018-2020 that were proposed by ESE.
- The Ministry of Health, with the technical assistance and support of ESE, has prepared and published reports on program and budget implementation of 19 preventive and curative programs.



Engaging citizens in planning, implementing and evaluating legal regulations, budgets and services in areas of social and economic rights



#### 1.1.

STRENGTHENING AND PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT OF CITIZENS IN THE PROCESSES ON PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF LEGAL REGULATIONS, BUDGETS AND SERVICES, AS PART OF THE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEGAL EMPOWERMENT APPROACH

In terms of strengthening the capacities of Roma CSOs and providing technical support to implement the integrated approach (social accountability and legal empowerment) in order to improve the health status of Roma communities, in 2018 we have continued to provide technical support to the three Roma partner organizations, operating in the municipalities of Shuto Orizari, Delchevo, Pehchevo and Vinica. In that regard, we have provided them technical support in the process of preparation of Community Score Cards. The Community Score Cards are based on the findings obtained through the conducted community survey in the Roma households during 2017. The technical support enabled them to adequately present the findings from the community survey regarding health and access to health care for mothers and children and women's reproductive health in the areas in which they work. We have also provided technical support in finalization of the local level advocacy strategies aimed to promote maternal and child health and womens reproductive health in the Roma communities. The advocacy strategies were developed in collaboration with an external expert in 2017. This process enabled the partner organizations to develop local advocacy strategies based on the findings from the conducted survey in the Roma communities and to foresee community involvement in the advocacy process. As a result of our support, two strategies were prepared, one by KHAM for the municipalities of Delchevo, Pehchevo and Vinica and one by IRIZ and Romano Chachipe for the municipality of Shuto Orizari.

During the reporting period, we have prepared reporting forms for the implementation of local strategies. Partner Roma organizations have submitted semi-annual reports, and in early 2019 they will also submit annual reports. The reports will serve to evaluate the implementation of strategies and enhance the preparation and implementation of strategies for 2019. In order to educate and inform the Roma community about the health rights of women, mothers and children, as well as the rights of patients, within the framework of technical support, we have prepared materials and guidelines for education on the following topics: women's reproductive health and health care, maternal and child health and health care, health insurance rights, protection of patients' rights and managing the records of vaccines obtained through the community survey for children who go abroad with their parents. Based on the materials prepared, the facilitators from the partner Roma organizations provided education activities in the Roma communities. In cooperation with partner Roma organizations, we have prepared a draft plan for increased

coverage of Roma households, with the aim to reach the vulnerable Roma households, i.e. those who have the greatest need to improve their access to health care.

In 2018, the newly established Roma CSO named Romano Chachipe, started working on the integrated approach in the municipality of Shuto Orizari. Some of the staff in the organization had experience working on this approach, but some of the facilitators and animators were beginners. To this end, we have prepared and conducted a four-day training for facilitators and animators in collaboration with external experts. The training covered the following topics: health and health law, health system and health system financing, maternal and child health, women's and reproductive health, health insurance rights, health rights protection, exercise of the right to access information from public character. At the training we have also presented the methodologies for work, i.e. community monitoring, monitoring and analysis of budgets, social audit and provision of paralegal assistance. The training strengthened the capacities of thirteen representatives from the newly established organization (facilitators and animators) and enabled them to properly implement the work of the integrated approach in the Roma communities in Shuto Orizari.

In terms of strengthening the capacity of CSOs working in the field of women's employability and employment to implement social accountability methodologies, during 2018, ESE in cooperation with Akcija Zdruzenska from Skopje provided technical assistance and support in developing and applying the social accountability methodologies to four local CSOs (Youth Cultural Center of Bitola, Women's Forum in Tetovo, Womens Civic Initiative from Sveti Nikole and the Women's Organization from Strumica). In this regard, ESE have provided technical assistance and support to these CSOs in the following steps of the social accountability methodology: mapping the community, mapping responsible institutions, entering the households and conducting community survey, developing community score cards, verification of the community score cards, community education, and advocacy activities. In the process of community mapping, in order to identify potential and current beneficiaries of active employment measures and services, for the needs of the four CSOs, ESE developed guidelines for conducting the community mapping and facilitated one meeting with the community members per municipality. During 2018, through the community mapping process we have identified 1,680 households and 3,932 household members from 11 settlements in the four municipalities, of which 1,161 unemployed citizens and 55 beneficiaries of active employment measures and services. In addition to the community mapping process in 2018, ESE provided technical assistance and support to the four local organizations during the implementation of the mapping process of public institutions and persons responsible for development and implementation of the active measures and services for employment. During the process of mapping the public institutions, 31 persons were identified as responsible for development and implementation of the active employment measures and services in the four municipalities. In order to conduct household entry and community survey activities, in 2018, ESE has provided assistance and support in developing of household entry

questionnaires, developing focus group discussion scenarios, and developing guidelines for their implementation. By implementation of the household entry and community survey activities, we aimed to assess the benefits that citizens felt from the funds spent to implement active employment programs, measures and services, with a particular focus on components 1.1.1., 2.1. and 6. from the Operational Plan for Active Employment Programs and Measures. In this regard, we assessed the access of unemployed citizens to employment measures, programs and services through registration in the ESA records; knowledge of the unemployed citizens about the employment measures, programs and services; the level of utilization of the employment measures, programs and services by the unemployed citizens; the level of satisfaction of unemployed citizens with employment measures, programs and services; the level of usefulness of the measures, programs and services for employment for the unemployed citizens; the level of utilization, quality, information and usefulness of the self-employment program, Macedonia employs and the employment services. The same aspects have been examined among citizens who are employed as a result of using the active employment programs, measures and services. The household entry and survey covered 826 unemployed persons, of which 407 were men and 419 were women, as well as a total of 56 employees as a result of the active employment programs and measures of which 33 were men and 23 they are women. In addition, we have organized six focus group discussions covering a total of 72 unemployed women and persons employed as a result of active employment measures and services. Based on the results of the survey, four community assessment cards were prepared. In the process of preparation of the community score cards, ESE provided: databases for data analysis, data processing and analysis assistance, and assistance in presenting the findings in the form of a Community Score Cards. In order to confirm the findings from the analysis, ESE assisted the four local CSOs in conducting six events to validate the results with a total of 85 citizens. Furthermore, in order to inform the unemployed citizens about their employment rights arising from the Operational Plan for Active Employment Measures, Programs and Services, after the implementation of the activities for entry into households, in cooperation with the regional offices of the Employment Service Agency in the four municipalities, a total of 16 educational workshops were conducted, covering a total of 194 unemployed citizens. Four local public debates and one national conference were conducted in cooperation with local CSOs in order to promote the identified constraints on the enjoyment of the right to employment and access to active employment measures and services. In addition, a short documentary video was produced in this process and recommendations were developed and submitted to improve the budget and program implementation of the active employment policies and to improve access of citizens to the six responsible institutions at national level and eight responsible local level institutions.

ESE is continuously working to strengthen the capacities of CSOs from Macedonia, and the South East Europe and Asia region to apply social accountability methodologies (budget monitoring and analysis, community monitoring, and social audit). In that regard, we have prepared and conducted: a two-day training on social accountability methodologies -

community monitoring and social audit for civil society organizations "Thirst for life" from Sliven, Bulgaria and "O del Amenca" from Ceestesti, Romania. Nine representatives of the two CSOs attended the training. The purpose of the training was to strengthen the capacity of these two organizations to implement social accountability methodologies in order to be able to promote health and access to health care for Roma in the areas where they work. The two organizations first started implementing these methodologies in 2018. In addition, during 2018, four one-day trainings were organized for more than 40 participants for organizations working in the field of harm reduction from "Juventas" Montenegro, "Margina" from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and "Prevent" from Serbia, The purpose of the trainings was to strengthen the capacities of these organizations to implement the methodology for budget monitoring and analyses in order to ensure the sustainability of harm reduction programs by funding from national budgets. All organizations started implementing this methodology for the first time in 2018. In addition to the training provided, in 2018 we have provided "Juventas" from Montenegro, "Margina" from Bosnia and Herzegovina and "Prevent" from Serbia with mentoring assistance and support in developing plans for applying the methodology for budget monitoring and budget advocacy. We also prepared and conducted a three-day training for CSOs working in the field of health promotion and access to health care for Roma from Macedonia and the Central and South-Eastern Europe region. The training was attended by 37 participants from 18 CSOs from Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. The training covered the following topics: social accountability methodologies (community monitoring, social audit and budget monitoring and analysis), legal strengthening and provision of training for paralegal assistance, and a process of merging the concepts of social accountability and legal empowerment. At the same time, we designed the training in a way that enabled organizations from all countries to present their work and exchange experiences in the implementation of these methodologies. The purpose of the training was to strengthen the capacities of CSOs working in the field of promotion of Roma health to apply the above-mentioned methodologies.

As a result of ESE's continued efforts to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to apply budget monitoring and analyses methodologies, in 2018 to support patient organizations advocacy efforts to improve their access to timely and appropriate therapy for rare diseases, we have prepared and published a budget analysis for the Program for Rare Disease for 2017. In addition, we also provided technical assistance and support to the civil society organization "HOPS - Healthy Options Skopje" in collecting and analyzing data on the utilization of the public funds raised from excise taxes on cigarettes, ethyl alcohol and beer transferred to the Ministry of Health budget. The purpose of the analysis was to assess the way how the excises are distributed in the ministry budget and used by the ministry, as well as to find options for redistribution of funds to the harm reduction programs after the Global Fund funds termination.

#### 1.2.

### CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS TO INVOLVE CITIZENS AND CSOS IN DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF LEGAL REGULATIONS, BUDGETS AND SERVICES

Through the Open Government Partnership Action Plan 2018 - 2020, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia obliged the Ministry of Health and the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia to pilot the implementation of the social accountability methodologies in order to monitor and evaluate the Program for protection of the population from HIV/AIDS and the operational plan of active employment measures and services. To this end, in 2018, we held three meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Health in order to present Budget Monitoring, Community Monitoring and Social Audit methodologies and discuss the stages of piloting these methodologies. At the meetings, it was agreed, in October 2018, that ESE would conduct an introductory training for the Ministry of Health staff working to coordinate health programs and CSOs working in the field of HIV/AIDS, and to moderate a workshop on creation on a plan of activities for implementing social accountability methodologies. Training and workshops are postponed for 2019 on the request of the ministry. The same process was implemented with the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia. A meeting was held with the agency to present social accountability methodologies and to agree on the piloting. March 2019 was determined as timeline for the training and workshop, as well as a start of the piloting.

#### 1.3.

#### IMPROVING THE HEALTH STATUS AND ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES FOR WOMEN, MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

In 2018, we have established a working expert group to determine the causes for the increase in perinatal and infant mortality in the Republic of Macedonia. The working group included experts in the following areas: statistics, public health, pediatrics-neonatology, patronage, gynecology and obstetrics. Representatives of the group included: State Statistical Office, University Clinic of Gynecology and Obstetrics, University Clinic of Pediatric Diseases, Institute of Public Health, Clinical Hospital Tetovo, Health Center - Shtip, and the Association of Private Gynecologists - Republic of Macedonia. Through the work of the expert group in 2018, we collected data on the conditions associated with perinatal and infant mortality and collected expert opinions on the problem based on their work experiences. Experts prepared five analyses on the subject matter. On the basis of the data collected and expert analyses in January 2019, an integral analysis will be prepared

on the conditions and possible causes of the increase in the perinatal and infant mortality in the Republic of Macedonia in the past years.

In 2018, the overall budget dedicated to the promotion and protection of women's reproductive health was monitored and assessment of the impact of existing macroeconomic policies on access to health care and services for women, mothers and children was conducted. The analysis is based on publicly available data and data obtained through the procedure for free access to public information and aims to determine the negative impacts on the health sector of certain government decisions in the area of macroeconomic policy, as well as budgetary items where it is possible to reallocate funds for health services to improve the health of women, mothers and children. We have prepared this analysis with the technical assistance and support of the consultant Rosio Moreno Lopes. The results were presented in a brief advocacy document containing recommendations for improving identified barriers. We have submitted this document to the Ministry of Finance, Government of RM and Ministry of Health.

In 2018, we have also prepared analyses regarding the program and budget planning and implementation of four programs of the Ministry of Health that are focused on improving the health of mothers and children and promotion of reproductive health of women for 2016. Moreover, we have prepared analyses on the implementation of the Program for Active Health Protection of Maters and Children, the Program for Regular Medical Check ups od Pupils and Students, the Program for Early Detection of Malignant Diseases - the Cervical Cancer Screening Component and the Program for Co-Payment for health protection of certain diseases of the citizens and health protection of mothers and children in the Republic of Macedonia (the part of covering the co-payment for childbirth). The analyses identified key problems and shortcomings and formulated recommendations for improvement of these programs in 2019, with particular reference to increased coverage of the target population with these programs. We have presented the analyses and the recommendations to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance. We had a meeting with two representatives from the Cabinet of the Minister of Health, where we explained the findings and presented our requests for improvement of the process for preparation and implementation of the health programs, as well as for improvement of the citizens coverage with preventive health care services. In this regard, we have also prepared press releases in which we presented key findings and recommendations arising from the conducted analysis. Our findings and recommendations were presented on a briefing with journalists.

Taking into account the continuity of ESE's work to monitor the Ministry of Health programs in 2018, we have implemented a procedure for collecting data on the program and budget implementation of four Ministry of Health preventive programs for 2017 aimed to promote maternal and children health, as well as promotion of women's reproductive health (Program for Active Health Protection of Maters and Children, the Program for Regular Medical Check-ups of Pupils and Students, the Program for Early

Detection of Malignant Diseases - the Cervical Cancer Screening Component, and the Program for Participation in the Use of Health Care for Certain Citizens' Diseases and Maternal and Infant Health Care in the Republic of Macedonia - deliveries). The procedure consisted of collecting publicly available data and data by submitting requests for free access to public information. Requests for free access to public information were submitted to the Ministry of Health and all public health institutions implementing the programs. The obtained data were entered into an electronic database. Based on the prepared data analysis, an analysis document will be prepared in order to show the degree of realization of the programs, identified deficiencies and recommendations for their improvement.

In 2018, we have participated in the working group of the Ministry of Health for the preparation of the Program for Active Maternal and Child Health Care for 2018, where we have submitted a proposal with measures that should be included in order to improve the preventive health care of mothers and children, with a special focus on vulnerable groups (Roma and rural communities). We have also participated in two World Health Organization (WHO) missions conducted in our country. Moreover, we have participated in a mission organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and WHO in order to assess the reduction of infant mortality, the promotion of women's health during pregnancy, and the promotion of children's health. Through participation in the workshops we presented the findings of ESE's work in this field, as well as recommendations for improving the situation. We are also contributed in a mission organized by the Ministry of Health and WHO for primary health care reform. ESE presented its findings and recommendations in its field of work, primarily regarding patronage nurses services, chosen gynecologist services and children health prevention teams from primary health centers. We had the opportunity to present our commitment to involve the community in the process of planning, implementing and evaluating health services at the primary level, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups of the population. As a result of this ongoing mission, it is expected to prepare a document with recommendations for primary health care reform in March 2019.

In 2018, within ESE, the Women's Health Information Center continued to provide free, quality and reliable information and counseling to women on reproductive health, menopause and osteoporosis, as well as offering free services. During 2018, 28 women approached the center to obtain health information as well as blood pressure measurements.

#### 1.4.

#### IMPROVING THE HEALTH STATUS AND ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES FOR ROMA PEOPLE

In the prepared analysis for the implementation of the preventive programs of the Ministry of Health (described in section 1.3) we have separately presented the identified conditions and problems regarding the coverage of the Roma population with preventive health care for mothers and children and women's reproductive health, as well as regarding the scope of activities foreseen in the three prevention programs monitored. At the same time, for advocacy purposes, we have developed recommendations for increasing coverage of vulnerable groups in the Roma community with preventive health care. The analysis was based on findings from the Roma communities, collected through implementation of the integrated approach and obtained through a questionnaire on household entry.

In 2018, we have prepared and implemented a National Advocacy Strategy for the Advancement of Roma Health and Health Care, with a particular focus on mothers and children and women's reproductive health in this community. In line with the strategy outlined in the letters sent to the Minister of Health (described in section 1.3), we have requested specific measures and activities to promote the health of women, mothers and children from the Roma communities through increased coverage with preventive health care services. Additionally, we have also requested for adoption of measures and activities in the preventive health programs of the Ministry of Health intended to Roma communities. We also presented our findings and recommendations at a meeting with representatives of the Cabinet of Ministers of Health.

We have revised the questionnaire for entry into Roma households in order to increase implementation efficiency and improve the quality of data collected. It was revised based on the findings and experiences from the initial implementation of the questionnaire in 2017. A new round of survey based on the revised questionnaire will be conducted in Roma in 2019.

In 2018, ESE participated in the 12th meeting of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion and at a workshop on health inequalities facing Roma in Europe. The meeting and the workshop were organized by the European Commission and held in Brussels. On the workshop ESE's work in the area of promotion of Roma health was presented. In addition, ESE has provided input/recommendations for the promotion of Roma health on European level.

#### 1.5.

#### IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE LABOR MARKET FOR WOMEN

In addition to the prepared analysis that presents the findings from the community survey conducted in the municipalities of Bitola, Tetovo, Sveti Nikole and Strumica (in detail described in point 1.1 of this report), in 2018 ESE has continued with the activities for monitoring the program and budget implementation of the Operational Plans for Active Employment Measures and Services at national level. During 2018, the data obtained through the process of monitoring conducted for the period 2014-2016, were supplemented with data related to 2017. The results of the nationwide monitoring conducted combined with the findings of the local communities were presented in a summary study entitled "Do and How Citizens Feel the Benefit from Implementing the Active Employment Measures, Programs and Services". In addition to the aspects shown in point 1.1. in this report, the study also addresses the financial performance of the Employment Service Agency (SEA); the movement of funds provided for the implementation of active employment programs, measures and services over the same time period; program and budget implementation of the three employment programs, measures and services for which the Agency's budget allocates the largest amount of funding each fiscal year and which are the focus of this analysis. Subject of the analysis were the Self-Employment Program (component 1.1.1 of the Operational Plan for Active Employment Programs and Measures for Labor Market Services 2017), the Subsidized Employment Program (component 2.3 of the Operational Program for Active Programs and Measures for Labor Market Services 2017) and Agency Employment Services (component 6 in the Operational Plan for Active Employment Programs and Measures for Labor Market Services 2017). The study provided recommendations for improving the agency's budget and program performance and improving citizens' access to active employment measures and services.

The findings and the recommendations were presented at four local public debates attended by representatives of the SEA regional offices, the Centers for Social Assistance, the local self-government, local CSOs, the media and the concerned citizens. In addition to the local public debates, a national conference was organized at national level attended by 63 persons, namely representatives of the ESA, MLSP, EU Delegation in Macedonia, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, SEA regional offices, CSOs, and citizen beneficiaries of the measures and services. A total of 4,079 people attended the national conference through live stream. For the needs of the national conference in collaboration with local partner organizations we have prepared a short documentary that has been watched by 1,751 people via social media. The recommendations presented at the public events were summarized in a document that was submitted to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia, the Government of the

Republic of Macedonia, the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the EU Delegation.

#### 1.6.

#### OFFERING SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS TO UNPAID WORK AS CARE FOR SERIOUSLY ILL PEOPLE

In 2018, we have prepared a statistical analysis of the data collected through a field survey regarding the provision of care to the seriously ill persons in the households. The analysis was prepared in collaboration with external consultant Debbie Budlender. Based on this analysis, a research report is in a final phase of development. The report will show how the care provided affects all aspects of the lives of individuals and families providing care in their homes. At the same time, the analysis will provide an overview of the problems faced by individuals and families providing care for the seriously ill person at home. Based on the findings, recommendations will be made to improve the situation for these individuals and families.

## ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS



#### 2.1.

#### STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF CSO FOR PROVIDING PARALEGAL ASSISTANCE TO POOR AND VULNERABLE GROUPS OF CITIZENS

In 2018, ESE in cooperation with civil society organizations continued to apply the methodology of measuring the costs and quality of access to justice, based on the perspective of those who exercise justice. In continuation to the previously undertaken activities, in the course of this year we continued to collect data on the costs that representatives of vulnerable groups of citizens are facing when resolving their legal problems, as well as valorizing the possible benefits of providing different types of legal aid to beneficiaries of CSO's services. In 2018, the data was collected from the case logs of six CSOs, over a six-month period, with data on a larger number of completed cases being collected. The ultimate goal of these activities is to build the capacity of CSOs to continuously track these costs incurred by the persons who approach them for help and support.

In terms of enhancing the knowledge and skills of paralegals who provide paralegal assistance and support to different vulnerable groups of citizens, and given the role and importance of paralegals as facilitating and enabling access to justice, thus contributing to legal literacy and empowerment of vulnerable groups of citizens, their education about the rights and obligations of the citizens in each sphere of the societal life is crucial for proper and timely information and acquaintance of their beneficiaries. Therefore, ESE as an organization that launched the development and establishment of a model for providing paralegal assistance and support, as a continuation of the efforts for initial and continuing education of paralegals working with Roma communities in relation to the right to health protection, health insurance and protection of patients rights, broadened the education of paralegals in other areas of law involving all the paralegals from the country that are providing these kind of services, with the support of the Open Society Foundation Macedonia as part of the Shared Framework for Legal Empowerment. In 2018, based on the contents of the Manual for paralegal education, we continued to implement trainings for paralegals that provide paralegal assistance and support to various vulnerable groups of citizens, in the frames of different CSOs: IRIS, Romano Chachipe, KHAM, HOPS, HERA and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights.

We identified specific issues and areas where the knowledge and skills of the paralegals need to be improved, based on the questionnaires for testing the knowledge gained by the participants on the training in the previous 2017. For this purpose, we conducted two three-day trainings with the same trainers from the previous year focusing on the same topics. The first training was attended by 30 persons (paralegals and project coordinators), while the second training was attended by 21 person- paralegals. The second training was not attended by the project coordinators. The paralegals have strengthened their knowledge on the following topics: the division of State powers:

sources of law and the judicial system in the country; grounds for court civil proceedings; the proceeding of the police, public prosecution and criminal courts; family and inheritance law; domestic violence and harassment at the workplace. In consultation with the trainers, in order to round up the knowledge of the paralegals on the above mentioned topics and issues, we prepared questionnaires for knowledge checking (two questionnaires). The paralegals were divided into two groups and each paralegal received personalized questionnaire with his name and surname. This kind of knowledge checking will enable knowledge checking on an individual level, as well as identifying organizational capacities for provision of paralegal assistance and support. In addition, the findings of the knowledge check are used to determine the content and manner of conducting the future trainings for paralegals.

#### 2.2.

## PROVISION OF EVIDENCE ON THE NEED OF PROVISION LEGAL ASSISTANCE BY CSOS IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THE LEGAL NEEDS OF POOR AND VULNERABLE GROUPS OF CITIZENS AND PROVISION OF EVIDENCE TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO JUSTICE

In 2018, ESE as a partner of the Coalition Margini has continued to conduct activities aimed at promoting the rule of law at national and international level and ensuring equal access to justice for all, as one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year we focused on collecting relevant data on the implementation of this development goal in our country, as well as on promoting the importance of access to justice among relevant institutions and civil society organizations. For this purpose, we have identified a list of indicators that served as a basis for collecting and analyzing all data sources for the implementation of this development goal in our country. We collected all publicly available data in this field, and provided additional information through requests for access to public information for the Basic courts and questionnaires for CSOs that provide legal and paralegal assistance and support to vulnerable groups of citizens. We have undertaken special efforts to improve the existing system of collection of data about the implementation of this development goal in our country. At a meeting with the State Statistical Office (SSO), we advocated for the expansion of the scope of data that SSO is collecting from the relevant institutions involved in ensuring equal access to justice. In parallel, we held a meeting with CSOs to discuss the possibilities for unified data collection regarding vulnerable groups of citizens.

In 2018 we continued to determine the costs and benefits of providing different types of legal aid in the country. The aim of these activities is to determine the cost of the three different legal aid modalities provided to the poor and vulnerable groups of citizens. From the data gathered, it can be concluded that the most common costs incurred by vulnerable groups of citizens in their access to justice are the following: travel costs, costs for

initiation of court procedure, and administrative costs. the intention is not to show whether one legal aid modality cost more or less in comparison to the other, but to calculate the current costs of providing these services, to highlight who is covering those costs and to calculate what costs the state should cover in order to ensure effective access to justice.

In 2018, we continued to collect data on the costs and quality of access to justice for women who suffered domestic violence. First, at the beginning of the year, follow-up interviews were conducted with the beneficiaries of ESE's Legal Aid Centre (LAC) from the previous 2017, with regard to the following: time spent searching legal aid; the quality of the service provided by ESE; the emotional stress experienced. Due to the objectivity and impartiality of this process, the interviews (34 in total) were conducted by an external person engaged by ESE. The following conclusions were drawn from the data obtained: two-thirds of the beneficiaries spent less than two weeks in searching for legal aid; women who have suffered domestic violence are largely satisfied with the legal services provided by ESE; women identify domestic violence as a major problem that seriously undermines their mental health. After the data collection cost-benefit analysis from the provision of free legal aid to women who suffered domestic violence was prepared.

In the course of 2018, we continued with data collection on the costs incurred by the clients, and in total data was provided for 182 women that receive legal aid by ESE's Legal Aid Center. In this regard, the data from the case logs showed that all clients incurred travel costs. A large number of clients also incurred the costs of initiating court procedure, i.e. a small number of clients were exempted from paying these costs. This continuous data collection through LAC will enable periodic comparisons of the situation in this field, with aim to identifying trends, as well as defining appropriate recommendations for advancing the legal protection and access to justice for women who have suffered domestic violence.

In 2018, we have intensified our cooperation with four Basic Courts, with the aim of collecting data on the extent of the use of "right of the poor" (exemption from court fees and other costs in proceedings) by vulnerable groups of citizens in civil court procedures. Following the data collection from the courts, we conducted 30 interviews with the beneficiaries of LAC on the same issue. From the data obtained from the courts, it can be concluded that the right of exemption from court fees and other costs in the procedure is almost not used in practice at all. This situation is partly due to insufficient awareness among the population about the possibility of using the "right of the poor", which was also confirmed by the data gathered from interviews with beneficiaries who had previously initiated court procedure. Namely, out of 30 women who initiated court proceedings, only four filed a formal request for exemption from court fees. Only one woman was informed by the Court that she might be exempted from paying court fees and other costs in the proceedings, while 26 out of 30 women received this information from ESE's LAC. In addition, half of the women interviewed did not know that the "right of poor" incorporates court representation by attorney, while less than half (12) were not informed for the

possibility to be exempted from paying the costs for experts opinion during the court procedure. The findings will serve as basis for preparation of report that will present that in practice "the right of poor" does not work and that relevant public institutions and courts need to undertake measures.

In order to improve access to justice for Roma, in 2017 we provided the necessary technical assistance and support to three Roma organizations who are providing paralegal assistance and support to local Roma communities in Shuto Orizari, Delchevo, Pehcevo and Vinica. Namely, in addition to the aforementioned activities for strengthening the knowledge and skills of paralegals, we have been working to further on improve the system of data collection and case management on the provided paralegal assistance and support. In a direction of advancing the work of the paralegals in the individual cases of violation of rights, in 2018, we conducted one visit per partner organization or three in total. After each supervisory visit, a report was developed with recommendations for improving different aspects of the paralegal's work. In addition, a number of consultations on different legal matters were provided by ESE upon paralegals request.

#### 2.3.

#### IMPROVING LEGAL PROTECTION OF WOMEN WHO SUFFERED VIOLENCE

In the course of 2018, ESE continued to undertake substantial efforts to improve the legal protection of women who suffered violence. This year, together with Akcija Zdruzenska, LA STRADA and the Coalition Margini, we submitted the Shadow/parallel report to the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), after which ESE representative participated on the 71st session of the Committee for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, held in the period of 22nd October to 7th of November in Geneva. We focused on specific human rights and areas that are of particular importance in overcoming gender inequality, such as employment, health care, legal protection of women victims of violence, gender machinery and more. This has contributed for increasing the international pressure on our country to implement internationally accepted human rights standards for the protection of women's human rights.

In the same direction, in cooperation with the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of Macedonia, we have worked to promote the Council of Europe's Convention for Elimination of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). ESE has prepared and conducted three trainings on the practical application of this convention for representatives of the Units of local self-government, CSW, police, health institutions, educational institutions and CSO's from Veles, Kumanovo and Gostivar.

During this year we continued to advocate for the improvement of the legal protection of women who suffered domestic violence. At the beginning of 2018, we submitted the previously prepared recommendations from the Analysis of the Legal Framework and the Institutional Response, as well as from the court monitoring on cases related to violence against women, to the relevant ministries for further adoption. These are comprehensive recommendations for advancing the legal protection of women victims of various forms of violence: domestic violence, trafficking in human beings, violence against sex workers. In this regard, general recommendations were made for the improvement of the system of data collection and continuous education of the professionals from the institutions, as well as specific recommendations for improvement of the legal framework for protection, as well as the proceedings of the institutions involved in the system of protection of women victims of violence.

Consequently, we have intensified our efforts to improve the system of legal protection against domestic violence. Thus, as part of the USAID Citizen Participation Project, we continued our efforts to assess the level of legal and court protection for women who have suffered domestic violence. We have reviewed the court monitoring methodology and instruments and continued with the collection of data about the proceeding of judges in civil and criminal cases of domestic violence.

In the course of 2018 the court monitoring was conducted to 226 court hearings related to domestic violence in the following Basic Courts: Basic Court Skopje 1, Basic Court Skopje 2, Basic Court Bitola, Basic Court Tetovo, Basic Court Veles, Basic Court Radovish, Basic Court Gostivar, Basic Court Kumanovo and Basic Court Prilep.

In addition, we conducted case file inspection on 33 completed criminal court cases, and prepared detailed in-depth analysis on the different aspects from proceeding of judges in the criminal cases related to domestic violence. We use the court monitoring findings to prepare recommendations for advancing the court protection for women who have suffered domestic violence, but also for undertaking concrete advocacy activities aimed to accelerate the necessary reforms of the civil and criminal justice system for protection from domestic violence. In this regard, together with the judges, we have developed guidelines for the proceeding of judges in civil court cases for imposition of temporary measures of protection against domestic violence.

During 2019 we will also prepare appropriate changes and amendments to the criminal legislation and proposals for the advancement of other relevant laws (the Law on Free Legal Aid and the Law on Protection against Gender Based Violence). In parallel with our efforts to improve the proceeding of judges, through the Guides we continuously inform women who have suffered domestic violence about the legal opportunities for their protection and encourage them to report the violence and initiate court procedure.

In addition to providing information, we have continued to provide specialized free legal aid and psychological counseling which are necessary to women who have suffered domestic violence. Legal aid, including legal advice and preparation of written submissions were provided to a total of 182 persons, out of which 130 were new and 52 existing clients at the Legal Aid Center. Women mostly needed legal aid for divorce proceedings, and in total 52 lawsuits for divorce were prepared, three lawsuits for change of court decision-custody, seven lawsuits for the payment of child support, one lawsuit for property division, two lawsuits for eviction from home and a proposal to revoke parental rights. Part of the women were provided with legal aid in the civil court procedures for the provision of temporary measures of protection (TMP) against domestic violence, and 21 proposals for TMP were prepared. Also there were 15 criminal charges filed to the Basic Public Prosecutor Offices, two appeals to the Court of Appeal, two lawsuits to the Administrative Court and 82 other written submissions. We provided psychological counseling to a 51 woman.

In the course of 2018, we continued to inform the public about the problem of violence against women and domestic violence, in order to increase social support for women victims of violence. In the period from November 25 to December 10, 2019, within the framework of the "International 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women", every year ESE organizes a campaign for the general and professional public to inform the public about domestic violence and legal opportunities for victim's protection. This year the campaign was conducted with the support of publicly known persons. By taking participation in the campaign Jana Burce, singer and host of MRTV Broadcasting; Christian Maney, influential twitter and TV editor; Katarina Ivanovska, model; Dragi Pavlovski news presenter, Alsat TV; Kristina Vesic, radio host at Metropolis Radio and TV host at Exclusive 1TV; Marija Davcevska, model; Robert Jankov, "Hello Macedonia", Channel 5; Milan Dimitrievski, basketball player; Dragana Levenska, actress at MNT; Fatmir Zakiri, basketball player; Sara Damcevska, model; Vladimir Blazev-Panco DNA, singer; Milena Tanasovska, fashion editor of Unique magazine; Mirko Popov, author and producer; and Alek Naumovski, a top model and owner of the Fashion Model Fashion Agency, they have contributed for greater recognition of this type of violence, as well as for sending the message of intolerance and prohibition of domestic violence.

We prepared awareness-raising materials, that is, within the framework of the campaign we prepared a poster with celebrities from our country, and every day during the campaign, on the social media we posted a photo of a public person with a motivational message in support of women who suffered domestic violence. Some of the messages that were sent were: "Stop tolerating the violence that is happening in front of your eyes. Choose an ending for each one, report the violence! "; Today and every day let us build a world in which women and girls will live without violence. We have the power, choose an end to a world without violence, etc. Through the social media messages on ESE's Facebook profile, during the campaign we reached to more than 35,000 people. The prepared poster with public persons was also published on the front page of the

newspaper "Free Press". We also prepared designs for a creative sticker and poster with basic information about the Legal Aid Center for women who suffered domestic violence, that could be printed and distributed next year.

During 16 days against violence we attended the USAID Facebook Live event where we discussed the global problem of gender-based violence, with the focus on domestic violence, including the measures that should be taken nationally, regionally and internationally to eliminate this type of a violence. In addition, ESE representatives were hosts on two national TV shows, the program "The Best Tips" on Channel 5 and "What Now" on MRTV. ESE's campaign was treated as the topic of the day on the TV program "Hi Macedonia" on Channel 5.

Every year, on the occasion of the New Year holidays, ESE organizes special events for women who have suffered domestic violence (LAC beneficiaries) and their children. In the period from 21st to 26th December 2018, we organized several events. Namely, we organized a visit to the company "Vitaminka" in Prilep on December 20th. This event was organized for 15 children and their parents. During the visit the children had the opportunity to get acquainted with the process of producing a product in the factory. They were also informed how their favorite products are made, tasted the products and at the end of the visit were presented with New Year's gifts. This activity was supported by the City of Skopje who donated funds for transportation, and the company "Vitaminka" who donated 23 New Year's presents for the children. Food for children and parents was provided through the USAID Citizen Engagement Project. We also organized a visit to the KK Barbados Horse Club in Skopje on December 25th. This event was organized for 16 children and their parents. During the visit, the children were provided with two hours of horse riding, and informed on how to feed and care for the horses. The host of the event, the horse club provided a cocktail for children and New Year's gifts. This year we also provided New Year's packages and jackets for children and parents. Thus, in the period from 24th to 27th of December, in ESE's offices there were 67 New Year presents provided, donated by Makprogres company and 150 jackets for children and their parents, donated by Macedonian Center for Civic Education - MCCE.

# PROMOTION OF FISCAL TRANSPARENCY OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS



#### 3.1.

#### INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND THE NEED FOR PRIORITY-BASED BUDGETING

In 2018 we have continuously worked on raising the awareness among general public about the importance of fiscal transparency and the need to increase the current level of transparency in the public institutions by providing information and educational materials and videos as part of our social media campaign "Fiscal Transparency Macedonia" and the website www.fiskalnatransparentnost.org.mk. As part of the campaign, we prepared and published 310 individual information and videos, which were visited on social media 289,703 times. The content posted on the site reached 4,500 people.

During the year we also worked to raise awareness among general public about the right to employment and access to active employment measures and services by providing information, materials and videos on our thematic website www.socijalnaotcetnostzarodovaednakvost.mk and through the social media campaign of ESE and the four local partner organizations. As part of the campaign, we produced and published approximately 427 individual information and videos that were visited 724,654 times. The content posted on the website reached 1,112 people.

ESE continuously informs the public about the results of its work through the social media campaign and its website www.esem.org.mk. As part of the campaign, we prepared and published 447 individual information and videos that were visited 1,068,138 times. Through the content that ESE published on its website ESE reached 6,900 people.

#### 3.2.

#### ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

As a result of the activities carried out in relation to the assessment of the level of proactive transparency of the public institutions, we have prepared a Report on the level of proactive transparency for 2017, which shows the availability of 16 key budget and programmatic documents on the websites of 25 public institutions. This report is used by public institutions, CSOs and the media at the national level as a relevant source of information to present the situation and progress in the proactive publication of programmatic and budget documents; initiating and implementing public sector reforms in the Republic of Macedonia in this domain; as well as taking steps to increase the number of documents and information to be published by public institutions.

In addition to the proactive transparency assessment, in 2018 we also assessed the level of reactive transparency of the public institutions and as a result of those activities we prepared the 2017 Reactive Transparency Report, which shows the fulfillment of the obligations arising from the Law on Free Access to Public Information. ESE carried out 1,338 procedures for free access to public information in front of the public institutions. As with previous reports, this report has been used by public institutions, CSOs and the media at the national level as a relevant source of information to present the state and progress of public institutions' implementation of the Law on Free Access to Public Information; initiating and implementing public sector reforms in the Republic of Macedonia in this field; as well as taking steps to improve the performance of public institutions in the procedures for access to public information. In order to ensure continuity in the progress of public institutions in applying the Law on Free Access to Public Information, ESE in 2018 conducted 1,230 public information request procedures before 86 public institutions and initiated 233 appeals.

In 2018, we have continued to monitor the implementation of 2,753 public procurement procedures carried by 62 health care institutions in the period 2016 - 2017 and in collaboration with consultant Debbie Budlender we developed a draft report on the progress /regression in the work of the institutions in this domain.

#### 3.3.

#### ADVOCACY FOR IMPROVED LEVEL OF FISCAL TRANSPARENCY

In 2018, we have undertaken a series of activities to propose solutions to improve the situation in this domain. However, in addition to proposing solutions, we have followed the implementation of the measures adopted regarding fiscal transparency and access to information in the previous period. Namely, based on the findings through the monitoring process conducted on the level of reactive and proactive transparency of the public institutions ESE prepared and submitted recommendations to more than 91 public institutions.

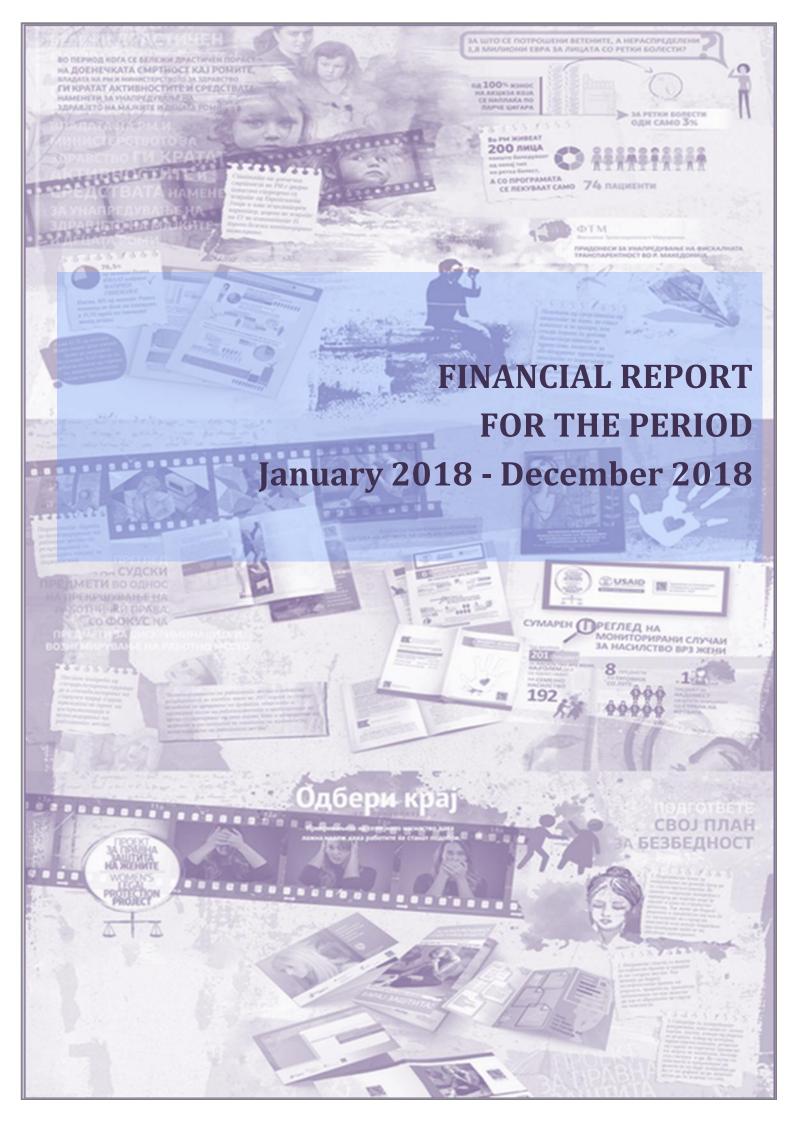
In 2018, on invitation from the Minister of Health, ESE attended a meeting with the Minister and representatives of his Cabinet, where we briefed on ESE's activities in the area of fiscal transparency, with a particular focus on public procurement and fiscal operations. In addition we have presented all ESE's activities in this field, key findings and recommendations that ESE made through implementing the activities under this strategic priority were also presented. At the meeting, the minister and his cabinet pledged to take steps to overcome the barriers.

In 2018, as a result of ESE's active participation in the preparation of the Open Government Partnership Action Plan for 2018 - 2020, the Government of the Republic of

Macedonia adopted five recommended measures to promote fiscal transparency and access to public information, such as: continuous publication of annual program and budget reports on the implementation of health programs from the budget of the Ministry of Health, piloting the social accountability methodologies on the Program for protection of the population from HIV / AIDS, developing unified formats for program and budget reporting and their continuous publication related to the implementation of active employment policies funded through the SEA budget, piloting of social accountability methodologies on the Operational Plan for Active Employment Measures and Services, and implementation of field activities within the communities to inform the public about their right for free access to public information.

However, as a result of the continuous participation in the Fiscal Transparency and Access to Information Working Groups in the Open Government Partnership process for 2016 - 2018, the Ministry of Health with technical assistance and support from ESE prepared and published program and budget reports for 19 preventive and curative health programs and selected the HIV/AIDS Program as a pilot program of social accountability methodologies. In addition, in cooperation with the Commission for Protection of the Right to free access to public information, in 2018 a video clip was developed and promoted in Macedonian, Albanian and sign language. The video was broadcast by nine national and local TV media (TV Due Gostivar, TV Kaltrina Struga, TV Plus Kumanovo, Telma TV from Skopje, Macedonian Radio Television, Radio Kavadarci, Television 3 Debar, TV Gura Kichevo and TV Star).

As a result of ESE's overall efforts to improve the functioning of the fiscal system in the Republic of Macedonia and to improve the level of fiscal transparency, ESE participated in a one-day meeting within the Ministry of Finance and submitted proposals for developing an electronic system for publication of each treasury change.



Revenues	amount in MKD
1. Transferred surplus of revenues from previous year	5,122,196
2. Income from interest rates and exchange rate discrepancies	9,242
3. Income from donations, membership fees and gifts	25,118,960
- FOSM (Foundation Open Society Macedonia)	14,279,653
- European Commission	5,481,357
- East West Institute for Management	3,820,181
- USAID	30,829
- Other income	1,506,940
Total	20.250.200
Total	30,250,398

Expenditures	amount in MKD
- Material expenditures, services and depreciation	4,182,454
- Capital and other assets	632,591
- Assistance, donations and other grants	17,662
- Salaries and social benefits	6,766,433
- Other expenditures	8.786,136
Total	20,385,276



ASSOCIATION FOR EMANCIPATION, SOLIDARITY AND EQUALITY OF WOMEN

www.esem.org.mk