Republic of Macedonia

Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR REDUCTION OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

(REVISED 2010-2020)

Skopje, March 2013

Brief summary of the National Strategy

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia enacted the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia for the period 2010 - 2020.

The National Strategy presents the various aspects and influences of the phenomena reflecting poverty and social exclusion. Based on a broader analytical material, it synthetizes the numerous indicators of the social phenomena, and it analyses, compares and presents them in-depth.

The strategic goals for changing the analyzed areas are suggested based on the identified the situation and the needs. In addition, the strategy presents a series of measures and activities in multiple areas, which have been used, in the past several years, as a basis for forming the action plans with deadlines and implementing agents for each measure.

The implementation of the measures and activities from the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010 – 2020 (hereinafter in the text: “the National Strategy) has, in the past two years, contributed to the achievement of some initial results with respect to the growth of employment and the reduction of unemployment, the number and the type of beneficiaries of social security and social protection benefits, as well as in the area of child protection. They are stipulated in the different sections of the National Strategy. In addition, broad changes have been implemented in the area of education with the introduction of the mandatory secondary education, the dispersion of the higher education, in the segment of information technology use and accessibility, as well as with reference to the pension and disability insurance benefits.

Considering that, after the enactment of the National Strategy and the implementation of the measures and activities, changes have been experienced and specific new policies and impacts have been created, the need was identified to revise the National Strategy for the period up to 2020.

The revision starts by looking at the need to focus the attention on the necessary changes in the various areas of significance for changing the processes, as well as strengthening the impacts with a view of reducing poverty and social exclusion.

Therefore the revised text of the National Strategy, looking at the analysis of the situation presented in the adopted part of the Strategy, as well as the identified situation in the different areas, adjusts the measures and activities adapting them to the demands arising from the achievements and the changes.

The National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion is revised also having in mind the Strategy of the European Union for Growth and Development up to 2020, which also impacts the creation of policies in these areas, as well as other significant or related measures and policies created in the Republic of Macedonia.

Nevertheless, some measures and activities stipulated in the National Strategy 2010 – 2020, which are still valid and significant, have been retained, strengthened or modified with a view of adapting to the modern processes and demands. This forms the full text of the revised strategy.

Having in mind the previously presented standpoints, assessments and terminological distinctions, the revised National Strategy 2010 – 2020 recognized the need to further intensify the efforts and policies with e view of achieving the strategic goal to improve the quality of life for all citizens, build a cohesive society where the fight against poverty and social exclusion will mean the existence of unconditional “equal chances and opportunities for all”.

***The main strategic goal*** for reducing poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia is:

***Reducing poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia by better use and strengthening of the human and material resources, improve the living conditions, the working conditions and the social conditions for all citizens, systemic and institutional synergy with a view of faster development, higher standard, better quality life and development of the mechanisms for social inclusion of the vulnerable categories of people in a local context.***

The aspirations, the measures, and the activities in the strategy focus on achieving the main strategic goal, adapting the policies in certain areas related to inclusive growth. They are concentrated in the following areas:

1. Employment and strengthening of entrepreneurship

2. Adapting the education to the labor market

3. Social and child protection and building a new social model

4. Promotion of health protection and long term care

5. Transport, communications and housing

6. Activation and strengthening the local authorities

7. Support of vulnerable groups

The revised National Strategy 2010 – 2020 presents the vision and the goals, as well as the principles that will underpin its implementation. It emphasizes the areas which will be harmonized with the European Union Growth and Development Strategy to 2020. The National Strategy proposes measures, activities, and solutions that lead to social inclusion and poverty reduction, subdivided into areas, for certain vulnerable groups and for the different levels of government. In addition, the strategy provides an overview for implementation of the National Strategy and the assumptions for the possible risks in that process. Finally, it provides recommendations and conclusions as well as monitoring indicators.

The Social Inclusion as a process of integration of individuals in society has become an unavoidable segment in the set of interrelated concepts which form a part of public policy in the country and which are constantly upgraded and improved. The social inclusion and the active measures it produces strengthen the link between the individual and society and promote the development and cohesion of society.

The National Strategy emphasizes the need to build a modern concept of dealing with socially excluded persons and form a new social model which primarily focuses of the person and the personality, but also respects and strives to resolve the causes for exclusion such as membership in certain groups, diagnosis, disability or any other basis for social exclusion of the citizen.

The process of determining social inclusion policies starts with the nationally defined goals and needs, as well as the need to follow and comply with the international indicators and the EU indicators for measuring social exclusion. Defining the scope of the measures based on defined criteria and operationalized actions determine the method of implementing social inclusion policies and adapting to the needs and the demands of the citizens.

Pursuant to the National Strategy, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia will review and adopt the annual operational plans and measures, as well as the deadlines for implementation and implementing agents, which will determine the time schedule for implementing the Strategy itself.

In order to see the effects from the implementation of the annual plan and the National Strategy, regular reports will be prepared. These reports will reflect the results of the implemented operational plans and they will be adopted by the Government.

The basic National Strategy started from the measures and the opportunities for a universal access to social services and benefits.

The revised National Strategy 2010-2020 incorporates the specifics of certain target vulnerable groups, presents their needs and demands based both on national level differences as well as municipal level differences.

Thus, social inclusion policy is formed both on the basis of the need and the opportunity of every citizen finding himself/herself at risk of social exclusion, as well as on the needs of specific vulnerable groups which shall be subject to proposed special measures harmonized with and corresponding to the previously proposed measures and activities.

The National Strategy was developed through a participatory and transparent process which was essential to providing the substance for the proposals stipulated in the Strategy. The implementation of a broad consultation proves with the participation of numerous responsible authorities and institutions, as well as associations of citizens and social partners dealing with various issues from the area of social inclusion, provided for their contribution and impact on the formation of the strategic needs and harmonizing the social processes. In addition, the participation of representatives from line ministries, authorities, organizations and institutions, as well as the local self-governments, the nongovernmental sector and the social partners facilitated an egalitarian creation of the strategy and the policies, which is a very important indicator of the active mobilization of resources and their inclusion in the implementation of the measures and activities envisioned in the National Strategy.

All suggestions and proposals have been appropriately incorporated in the National Strategy with the intention of providing a contribution to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups in society.

Section 1 Introduction

The National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia for the Period 2010 – 2020(revised) is a result from the strategic process implemented in accordance with the Program of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The implementation of the strategic process helped determine the goals and the most important priorities, define programs, projects, measures and activities to achieve the priorities, and the identify the funds and resources necessary to achieve the priorities.

The development of the National Strategy starts from the defined priorities and policies, but also from the expectations that should be fulfilled and the measures that need to be undertaken in order to achieve the desired objectives.

Therefore, the existing documents, laws, strategies, plans, analyses, information and other sources that provide a picture of the past processes and solutions in this area have been taken into consideration, as well as the obligations arising from the international ratified documents and acts.

The National Strategy presents the situations and the systemic bases that exist in the different areas and which should be changed and improved.

Therefore, the strategy proposes measures, activities and solutions that lead to social inclusion and reduction of poverty. The proposed text synthetizes the findings of a consultative proposes implemented on several levels.

During the preparatory period, the needs and the reasons for revising the National Strategy were identified, as well as the effects of the various influences effectuated in an effort to reduce poverty and strengthen the social cohesion within the society.

Based on a prepared plan and a submitted questionnaire, numerous contacts, meetings and conversations have been made with representatives from 9 responsible ministries, two secretariats and three institutions included in the National Coordination Mechanism for Monitoring the National Strategy. Their proposals and suggestions have been appropriately incorporated in the Strategy.

Several workshops have been held on municipal level, with representatives from various structures, organizations and institutions. At these meetings, the participants had the opportunity to acquire firsthand information about the needs of specific municipalities regarding the reduction of poverty and social exclusion. These findings are presented in Section 6 of this strategy. Section 6 also expresses the need to activate the local governments in suppressing poverty and social exclusion, especially with respect to phenomena manifested in the local communities.

The revision also aims at harmonizing the priorities and goals of the National Strategy with the Strategy of the European Union for Growth and Development until 2020 in the area of fast, sustainable and inclusive growth. The priorities determined by the European Union Development Strategy until 2020 have been appropriately incorporated in the revised National Strategy 2010 – 2020 in a manner that will speed up the processes of social cohesion and will influence the efforts to attain full membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the European Union. In addition to the universal approach there is also a need to include different specificities of the vulnerable groups which requires details of the needs and the demands with a view of reducing the poverty and social inclusion, which is provided in section seven of this strategy. Namely, the measures and the activities, as a universal form of access to the social services and benefits for all the citizens, have been retained and the specifics of specific target vulnerable groups have been added. The strategy also presents their needs and demands based on national level differences, as well as on local level differences.

The strategy also considers the role and the need to strengthen the local community i.e. activate the municipalities to resolve the issue of social inclusion of the citizens.

The formation of a new model for resolving the problems giving rise to the social exclusion of the citizens presupposes the creation of an environment that accepts all people and provides all of them with equal chances and opportunities to express their potential, knowledge, capabilities and skills. For the socially vulnerable groups and communities like the Roma, the strategy takes into account the documents and the strategies enacted to resolve the specific problems facing these groups and they are complementary and strengthened by the measures and provisions of this strategy.

On the other hand, the National Strategy is a multi-sector strategy with a programmatic character and therefore the revision process requires a broader consultation process. This should ensure a broader support of the implementation of the solution of the National Strategy.

In addition, there is a need to consider the institutional dedication and operability of the National Coordination Mechanism with a view of achieving the goals of the National Strategy. Namely, the National Coordinating Mechanism for Reduction of Poverty and Social Inclusion in the Republic of Macedonia was formed with a decision of the Government of Macedonia with a specified term of office and responsibilities. It aims at providingadministrative, financial and technical assistance to the implementation of the National Strategy.

The revised National Strategy does not have the section “Current Situation Analysis” considering that this is a very large section (more than 20 pages) that was presented in the basic text of the National Strategy and in the different analyses conducted for the purposes of this strategy and other macroeconomic documents. This was done in order to avoid unnecessary repetition of overviews of data which are largely known, processed, used and presented (such as demographic characteristic and situations, economic activity, unemployment, labor market characteristics, data on poverty, healthcare, education and social protection, transport, communications and housing, child protection and gender aspects). For each of the above areas, the revised National Strategy presents the changes implemented between the enactment of the National Strategy and its revision. The intension is to provide a concentrated text, focused on the activation and realization of the measures and activities comprehensively presented in the revised National Strategy and which influence the achievement of the strategic goal: reduction of poverty and social inclusion in the Republic of Macedonia.

The issue of gender equality and perspective is addressed in the National Strategy and is incorporated in the different fields, as well as in the guidelines for future activities and measures. The objective is to improve the position of women and, in the areas of social risk, to undertake measures for protection, reduction of poverty and the level of social exclusion of women.

In addition, in order to present the complexity and the comprehensiveness of the National Strategy, especially with respect to the active measures and policies, the document presents all the sections regardless of whether they change or remain the same, and the new measures and activities have been added to the text. Thus the final product is a consistent revised National Strategy for the Period 2010 - 2020.

**Section 2 Commitment to the strategy**

**Vision**

The Republic of Macedonia should be a society with reduced poverty and social exclusion of its citizen through:

* Provision of access for all to the resources, rights and services necessary for equal participation in society, taking into account the protection and exclusion, all the while fighting against all forms of discrimination which lead to exclusion;
* Active social inclusion of all, by promoting equal participation on the labor market and fighting against poverty and exclusion;
* Policies of social inclusion through well-coordinated programs and measures and all levels of governance (central and local) and other relevant factors with efficient and effective public policies, including economic, fiscal, educational and training strategies and projects.

**Mission**

**For whom:**

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia this strategy shall serve the wellbeing of all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, irrespective of their social background and the type of exclusion, and will dedicate special attention to the vulnerable groups as well as the local context.

**What does it do?**

The mission of the Strategy is to implement the following basic and important processes

* Promotion and increasing of the opportunities for the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia to participate in educational, work and general social activities;
* Addressing and reducing the barriers to the resolution of the social exclusion specific problems of the different vulnerable groups facing such barriers;
* Promotion of social inclusion among children and young people, which will help create an environment of long term opportunities for the future generations;
* Strengthening the vulnerable communities with respect to quality of life and capabilities to address the barriers to their wellbeing.

The National Strategy shapes the policies that lead to the achievement of the goals envisioned in the European Union Strategy for Development and Growth until 2020, which is based on the aspirations of the country for European and Atlantic integrations. In addition, it facilitates the fulfillment of the prerequisites for the process of harmonizing experiences related to good practices and policies from the European countries, as well as achieving the Millennium Developmental Goals. The Strategy also takes into account equal representation of all ethnicities, in accordance with the provisions of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

**How will it be achieved?**

* Increased opportunities on the labor market by creating new jobs;
* Addressing poverty on national and local level;
* Activation of local authorities to better address the needs of the vulnerable groups;
* Ensure that every child beginning primary education is ready and capable of learning and gaining the most benefits from the years spent in the education process
* Reduce or completely eliminate the number of children that drop out of the education process or that are insufficiently capable of dealing with life and the opportunities of being engaged in a work process;
* Increase the participation in society and the readiness to seek lifelong training and learning;
* Eliminating the obstacles to participation in society that individuals face, including the obstacles related to deteriorated health condition, lack of self-confidence due to poverty, adverse housing conditions and adverse additions;
* Eliminating the discrimination and inequality due to gender, race, religion, disability and other grounds;
* Reduction of the unequal distribution of healthcare;
* Provision of good quality housing conditions for everyone;
* Reduction and elimination of the differences between the different communities in society and helping the vulnerable and disadvantage communities to function better and to acquire knowledge and providing the preconditions necessary to achieve this;
* Support and encourage the private sector to contribute more to the wellbeing of the vulnerable communities;
* Promote and support a culture of active citizenry (good governance) which will provide for: autonomous and self-sustainable development, participation in civil life and activities in society and care for the vulnerable communities;
* Considering the possibilities to introduce an adequate minimal income sufficient to satisfy the basic life necessities (or minimum standards) in accordance with EU recommendations.

**Why do we need a successful National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion?**

Social exclusion starts from the fact that everyone in the Republic of Macedonia should have the opportunity and access to resources and services that make his/her life healthier, happier and more productive, which is essential for every strong family and every group in every possible traditional or new forms of good governance. When families and groups work well that means that the society has institutions and processes that generate good living, security, creativity, confidence and appertaining. Families and societies that care and that are reliable offer the best protection against any possible social exclusion.

Social exclusion:

* Increases for certain groups and places facing multiple problems with maximal complexity;
* Appears and concentrates in particular moments on life, when people face changes to role or status in life, changes to their life expectations and responsibilities (critical transition moments).

Social inclusion:

* Supports social innovative changes and relates integrally to economic development and production;
* Is everyone’s responsibility. Individuals and groups can contribute with their local knowledge and capabilities, dedication, energy and vision for social changes for the better. The Government, the private sector and the service organization can contribute to a greater social inclusion with their technical knowledge and necessary resources (material and financial).

Good governance can lead to changes for the better. People feel socially excluded when they think that their society does not have mechanisms to hear their voice on matters that concern them personally.

**Goals and objectives**

***The main strategic goal*** for reducing poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia is:

***Reduction of poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia through better use and strengthening of the available human and material resources, improving the living, working and social conditions of all citizens, systemic and institutional synergies with a view of faster development, higher standard, better quality of life, and developing of social inclusion mechanisms for the vulnerable categories of people in a local context.***

Strategic objectives

*1. Improve the conditions and opportunities for employment, strengthen the entrepreneurship and reduce unemployment, especially of the vulnerable categories, improve the standard of living and strengthen social cohesion.*

*2. Provide for a full coverage of students in primary and secondary education, raise the level of literacy and the level of education of the citizens, provide education for vulnerable groups and adapt the education system to the labor market, strengthen the potential of the market to engage the working population at all levels.*

*3. Form a system of social protection for the poorest citizens, provide access to institutional and other forms of protection and strengthen the capacities of the system of social protection and child protection, as well as form a new social model and concept oriented around the individual and his/her needs.*

*4. Promote the access to and the quality of healthcare for the socially excluded groups, as well as the access to good quality services for the socially vulnerable and excluded groups, in accordance with the standards and practices of the EU.*

*5. Reduce the inequalities in the provision of transport and access to the transport system itself, as well as increase the quality of services. Achieve an information society for all, i.e. broad and effective participation in the community with the aid of information and communication technologies for the categories deemed as socially excluded in that area. Achieve standardized and harmonious housing conditions for the categories of citizens deemed to be socially excluded in the area of housing.*

*6. Strengthen the role of the local governments in addressing poverty and social disadvantages; create capacities and resources with a view of building social cohesion.*

*7. Develop mechanisms for reducing poverty and social exclusion of the vulnerable categories of citizens, with specific measures and activities.*

**The goals and objectives of the National Strategy are formed and achieved through**: mechanisms, measures and activities, elaborated in detail later in the text. Based on the assessed conditions and the needs of the various categories of socially vulnerable, poor and excluded persons and groups, the Strategy provides possible directions for social changes. After the institutions have considered the possibilities for social inclusion, formed a new approach or a model for social inclusion and established various forms of support, as a concept which facilitates the creation of a better environment for effective and efficient engagement of citizens, the Strategy presents the possibilities and measures for reducing poverty and increasing the level of social inclusion of the socially excluded persons.

All of these procedures, activities and measures create a basis and opportunities for adaptation to the measures envisioned in the European Union Strategy for Growth and Development until 2020 and for creation and harmonization of common policies for social inclusion, in accordance with the envisioned procedures.

**Principles**

The basic principles of the National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia are based on:

* **Integrality**: “A multidimensional problem requires a multidimensional solution”
* **Prevention** – “better to prevent then cure”
* **Understanding** what is possible
* **Inclusion** – “dedication” entails joint efforts of the central and local government, the public institutions, the business community, and the relevant nongovernmental organization in the identification of the substance of the needs for development of the specific policies, programs and projects for the different vulnerable groups.
* **Encouragement** – the successful joint handling of the social problems requires the government to encourage all social factors and create a culture of (self-help) among individual and groups.

**Section 3 Proposed measures, activities and policies**

Based on the identified situations in the areas that feature manifestations or concentrations of social exclusion and poverty, needs have been identified to implement changes that could be conducive to surmounting the negative phenomena and commence positive development processes.

A set of measures, activities, policies and solutions, that can be scheduled various stages, comprise the strategic approach to social inclusion and poverty reduction. Some of them are functional while others will have to be upgrader and/or changed with a view of improving the effects. In addition there are proposals which will have to be systemically shaped, formed and implemented.

**Harmonization with the European Union Strategy for Growth and Development until 2020**

Facing the financial and economic crisis in 2008 and 2009, as well as due to the need to define a strategic framework for the period from 2010 to 2020, the European Commission prepared a document entitled “Europe 2020: Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growths”which was adopted on the European Summit held on 17.06.2010. The Strategy comprehensively presents the most important elements that will facilitate the surmounting of the crisis and achieve growth and development in the EU member states in the upcoming period.

The European Union Strategy for Growth and Development until 2020 (hereinafter in the text: “EU 2020 Strategy), aims at facilitating a successful exit from the economic and financial crisis for Europe and provide a sustainable future for the citizens, by providing new jobs and better working conditions.

This begs the question **what is the relevance of the EU 2020 Strategy for the candidate countries for EU membership and why is it necessary to harmonize certain policies with this strategy**. Namely, the Strategy itself explicitly emphasizes the importance of the strategy for the candidate countries and EU neighboring countries, which have significant potential, as guidance for accelerating and compatibility of the process of reforms in the future member states. It emphasizes that: **“…the EU 2020 Strategy is not only relevant within the EU, but also offers significant potential to the candidate countries and our neighbors, helping them so speed up their reforms. The expansion of the area where EU rules apply will create new opportunities both for the EU as well as its neighbors.”.[[1]](#footnote-2)**

The EU members states, considering the framework of the EU 2020 Strategy, are expected to precisely define their goals and outcomes, as well as the measures that will be implemented in the next financial period (after 2013) through the state budget, the structural funds and other sources of financing, in order to achieve the long since established common goals. These expectations also refer to the candidate countries and hence the need to harmonize their policies and developmental concepts.

A more in-depth analysis of the goals stated in the EU 2020 Strategy suggests that the formulated priorities correspond or overlap the developmental priorities of the Republic of Macedonia. Thus, the macroeconomic stability, the strengthening and development of the infrastructure, the improvement of education, the increase of investments, the investments in the environment, the reduction of poverty and social disadvantage, the prevention and repression of corruption and organized crime, the formation of an efficient judiciary and other clearly stated particulars, do correspond to the requirements of the previously mentioned Strategy. The expansion of the principles of the Strategy and the rules of the EU create new opportunities for economic strengthening and exiting the crisis.

Therefore the EU 2020 Strategy can serve as a **guide and a catalyst of the reforms in the candidate countries for EU membership**, such as the Republic of Macedonia, both on the national level, as well as in the regional cooperation.

The Strategy has five overarching goals, i.e. employment, research and development, education, social inclusion, and combating poverty and the climate change and energy, which have to be realized until 2020. These are the goals for the future of Europe.

The EU 2020 strategy focuses on three interrelated priorities, namely:

1. Smart growth – development of a knowledge and innovation based economy (scientific and technological research and development, innovations, education and digital society);
2. Sustainable development –by stimulating the competitiveness and production, which will utilize resources more efficiently and contribute to a greener economy;
3. Inclusive growth–better participation on the labor market, economy with a high degree of employment, combat against poverty and social cohesion.

With the implementation of this Strategy, Europe should globally develop into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. The priorities raise seven initiatives: innovation, mobile youth, digital agenda for Europe, resource efficiency, industrial policy, new qualifications and employment opportunities and a European platform for fighting poverty.

The Republic of Macedonia is fully committed to the realization of the goals of this Strategy. It continuously creates and implements policies, strategies and measures aimed at providing a comprehensive economic growth for new jobs and improve the living standard of the citizens. Increasing the employment rate, strengthening the fiscal policies, increasing investments, supporting innovation, are some of the common developmental challenges of the countries in the region. These can also form a part of the regional cooperation within the EU 2020 agenda.

The progress of the realization of the priorities will be tracked by measuring the performance and fulfillment of numerous specific measures being implemented in various development spheres. For example, in the EU 2020 Strategy, the European Commission to reach 75% employment rate of all European citizens between 20 and 64 years of age, invest 3% of the European GDP in research and development, as well as continue to intensively working on the fulfillment of the goals from the climate and energy strategy. In addition, the opening of new jobs and the increasing of the mobility of the working population and the students is one of the basic objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy.

Comparing the strategic priorities of the EU with the priorities specified in the National Strategy for Employment of the Republic of Macedonia until 2015, some of the indicators are different. In order to harmonize the national goals with the goals of EU 2020, the table below presents a comparative overview and the assumed national target should be a basis for future deeper considerations.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Macedonia 2010 | National target 2015 | EU 2020 target | Assumed national target for the Republic of Macedonia for 2020[[2]](#footnote-3) |
| **1** | **Employment rate (20-64)** | **48.1%** | **55%** | **75%** | **60%** |
| 2 | Employment rate of young people (15-29) | 26.5% | 29% | / |  |
| 3 | Employment rate of young people (15-24) | 15.4% | 17% | / |  |
| 4 | Employment rate of women (15-64) | 34% | 42% | / |  |
| 5 | Employment rate of the elderly (55-64) | 34.2% | 41% |  |  |
| **6** | **Persons 18 – 24 years of age that have dropped out of the education system** | **15.5%** | **14%** | **10%** | **12%** |
| **7** | **Persons that have completed higher education (30-34)** | **17.1%** | **19%** | **40%** | **30%** |
| **8** | **Population living below the poverty line** | **27.3%** | **26%** | **/** | **21.5%** |

Source: SSO, Labor Force Survey 2010 for rows 1-7 and Income and Living Conditions Survey 2010 for row 8

The third priority of the EU 2020 Strategy, **Inclusive Growth**, is, in fact an area of special interest, considering that it relates to the goals and areas addressed in the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia for the period 2010 - 2020. (The other two priorities: smart growth and sustainable development should be addressed in other documents) Therefore, in order to direct the National Strategy, it provides the priorities for better participation on the labor market, formation of an economy that produces conditions conducive to employment, entrepreneurship, strengthening the fight against poverty and strengthening of the social cohesion.

The National Program for Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA), prepared every year, envisions the specific steps for harmonizing the national policies and the legislation with the European legislation, as well as strengthening the capacities for policy implementation for each of the 33 chapters. The planning of activities in this documents, which holds a key position in the integration process of the Republic of Macedonia, is guided by the comments from the EC Progress Report for the Republic of Macedonia, the recommendations from the work of the bodies formed within the Stabilization and Association Projects and the measures contained within the recently started high level dialogue.

According to the NPAA, several measures were implemented in the area of social policy and employment. These measures were included in the area 3.19.5 Social Inclusion.[[3]](#footnote-4)These include: formation of a coordination mechanism for monitoring and implementation of the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010-2020; Realization and monitoring of the implementation of selected micro projects in the field of fighting against poverty and social exclusion in 8 municipalities; Implementation of trainings for the nongovernmental sector at local level, about the mechanisms for accountability, monitoring and public participation of local nongovernmental organizations in the policies, programs and budgets of the municipalities; Implementation of the project “Strengthening of the Relevant Social Inclusion Stakeholders on Local Level” (IPA IV); Implementation of the project “Fostering of Social Inclusion and Inclusive Labor Market” (IPA IV); Implementation of a program for patrol social workers in three pilot municipalities with a view of strengthening preventive social protection on local level; Supporting projects from the area of social protection and inclusion, implemented by nongovernmental organizations and strengthening of the cooperation with the civil sector in this area; Provision of the service of spa and climate recreation for retired people and the service of summer and winter vacation for children at social risk.

The following obligations are in the stage of implementation: Revision of the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010-2020, according to the EU 2020 Strategy; Operational plan, for 2013, for the implementation of the revised National Strategy for the Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010-2020; Organizing an on-line course on strengthening the capacities of social inclusion for all interested citizens; Implementation of the project “Strengthening of the Relevant Stakeholders for Social Inclusion at Local Level – Phase 2” (IPA IV); Supporting projects from the area of social protection and inclusion, implemented by nongovernmental organizations and strengthening of the cooperation with the civil sector in this area; Implementation of a program for patrol social workers in three pilot municipalities with a view of strengthening preventive social protection on local level; Expansion of the network of soup kitchens in rural areas in 2 municipalities (Cheshinovo and Centar Zhupa).

The implementation of measures aimed at increased employment, investment in qualifications, modernizing the labor market and the education system, as well as promotion of the social protection system, helps the real fight against poverty and is conducive to social cohesion. The assessment suggests that the aging processes happening in Europe can be tackled only by a maximal utilization of the existing potentials, i.e. by effectuating the human capital and by providing access to better quality services.

**Each of the following sections of the revised National Strategy 2010 – 2020 incorporates measures for harmonization withthe principles of the EU 2020 Strategy, the goals and the initiatives, as well as the national opportunities and priorities for reducing poverty and social exclusion.**

**Area 1Employment and strengthening of entrepreneurship**

The unemployment rate indicators show negative trends in recent years since the enactment of the Strategy. Thus, according to the LFS data, the unemployment rate declined from 32.0 in 2010 to 30.6 in the third quarter of 2012. Although this percentage is small, it still shows some downward tendency. In addition there are changes with respect to the active employment policies which also have positive influences.

Still, dedication and urgency are required to implement a continuous, responsible and efficient employment policy, which is a top priority. The improvement of employment depends on the implementation of a comprehensive macroeconomic policy, as well as a stronger economic growth and investments. Because of the recovery phase in the post-recession stage, the employment situation can improve also by undertaking specific measures in the area of institutional, administrative and legislative management of the employment policies.

This was done, to an extent, with the enactment of the Law on Tracking Unemployment, which introduced some change regarding the people that actively seek work and the people recorded on the registry of unemployed persons, which helped realistically express the number of unemployed persons.

This and other measures can have an impact on the reduction of the level of unreported work which, according to some calculations, represents 33 to 37 percent of GDP, increase of the employment rates of vulnerable ethnic groups (such as the Roma – 78.5%); higher rates of participation of women on the labor market, especially those from marginalized ethnic communities, like the Albanian and Turkish ethnic communities, etc.

**Strategic objective**

**Improve the conditions and the opportunities for employment, strengthen entrepreneurship and reduce unemployment, especially among vulnerable categories, improve the standard of living and strengthen social cohesion and sustainable demographic development.**

**Results**

In order to achieve this employment objective, the following results need to be achieved:

1. Reduction of long term unemployment;
2. Increased access to employment, especially for the young and specific vulnerable groups
3. Increased gender equality with respect to employment;
4. Creation of equal opportunities for employment for disable persons;
5. Creation of equal opportunities for employment for elderly persons (55-64years);
6. Fulfillment of the constitutional principle of fair and adequate representation in employment;
7. Strengthening of entrepreneurship;
8. Engaging the socially unsecured persons in the agricultural sector;
9. Formalizing the informal economy.

**Measures**

In order to achieve this objective, several **priorities, measures and activities** are proposed. The implementation of these will improve the situation with the social exclusion on the labor market:

**Result 1: Reducing long term unemployment**

1. Identify the **reasons** for long term unemployment and, on that basis, propose systemic and other measures to reduce unemployment.
2. Monitor the **indicators** that indicate the effects of the undertaken active measures and policies (or suggest any adverse effects of the implementation of certain policies), as a prerequisite to removing the obstacles that create the long term unemployment.
3. Enact **measures with individually tailored programs** and active measures in order to remove the barriers to employment of the long term unemployed which become stigmatized and socially excluded.
4. Provide frequent information about the work force demands of the labor market.
5. Subsidize the employment of the registered unemployed persons which are more difficult to include on the labor market.
6. **Public works** initiatives in regions where a significant part of the population is exposed to social risks, in order to provide work for the unemployed so that they can acquire certain practical knowledge and skills, provide for equal regional development, and opportunities for work and employment, as well as poverty reduction.
7. Increase the use of **domestic resources** in investments in order to multiply the effects from the investments, since the use of domestic resources stimulated economic activity and impacts the growth of jobs.
8. Programs for preparation for employment, as well as the use of funds including EU funds, for **training and retraining** of the long term unemployed people in accordance with the demands of the labor market.
9. As a result of the crisis, a certain number of workers has difficulties finding a job and belongs to the group of long term unemployed which require **additional measures and support** in order to be accepted by the labor market.
10. **Reduction of the business start-up costs**, which stimulates individuals to open their own companies, which, in turn, relieves the burden of the social funds.

The measures are in accordance with the EU 2020 Strategy, while the measures drafted in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Government national programs, action plans and the support measures are still current and they have to be continuously innovated and adapted to the conditions of society.

**Result 2: Increased access to employment, especially for the young**

1. **Greater access to employment** means opportunities to earn revenues and a better personal life. Therefore the responsible institutions and authorities have to create conditions for social inclusion of the citizens in the work and social processes.
2. Implementation of the **rural development policies** which provide a preferential access to funds and an increased level of support for the investments of young farmers. Implementation of the measures from the Rural Development Program referring to proving assistance to young farmers to start agricultural activities, i.e. helping young star-up farmers establish their own agricultural holdings. In addition, implement the measure referring to providing incentives to the elderly people to leave the agriculture field by providing them monetary assistance until they achieve the requirements for full retirement, but not more than five years. This measure will apply to agricultural holders that abandon their holdings by selling them to young farmers before retirement.
3. Organize **employment fairs**, thus providing a forum for the work force supply and demand to meet, especially on local level.
4. Create **equal opportunities** for employment of the young, the disabled, the elderly and all vulnerable groups. This also applies to creating equal opportunities for **all ethnic communities** on the labor market, i.e. increasing their representation wherever it is insufficient. Therefore, the Strategy envisions the implementation of: equal representation of ethnic communities in the state administration, the units of local self-government (ULS) and the public enterprises. Realization of the Strategy for Roma – Roma Decade, which is an important active document, together with the action and operational plans that can contribute to achieving greater social inclusion of this segment of the population.
5. The integration of **young people** in the labor market should be expressed primarily by opening of new and vacant job positions, harmonizing the education system with the needs of the labor market, and especially strengthening the interest and conditions for **starting-up a new business**. In addition, the provision of support for the first employment of young people, enabling young people to acquire experience through internships, help a large number of young people be more employable, i.e. more involved in society. In that context, we would like to emphasize the ongoing activities, such as subsidizing and supporting the **employment of children without parents**, the activities of the jib clubs, the professional orientation and other activities conducive to finding employmentand reducing the time young people have to wait before they find their first employment. There is a need for individual employment plans for employment, training programs for the young people to start their own business.
6. Introduce **mentorship in the training of young people** during the work process, so that they can quickly master the knowledge needed to do the work and to satisfy the demands of the labor market.
7. Establish an optimal relation between the security of the employee and the flexibility of the employment and dismissal taking into account the balance between private life and work life, i.e. greater flexibility in employment, especially for young people.

**Result 3: Increased gender quality with respect to employment**

1. The area of **gender equality** requires decisive measures to increase the participation of women on the labor market and reduce the difference between the genders with respect to employment, unemployment and the level of salary. A systemic analysis of the gender characteristics of the labor market suggests that there are needs for training in order to overcome the gender gap, and there are needs for greater inclusion of women in the work processes.
2. Implementing active employment policies, supporting self-employment and subsidizing the active programs and measures conducive to **employment of women**, can help achieve the expected results. The objective is to increase the participation of women in the total number of employed people and reach an employment rate of women of 42% by 2015. This includes: training, activities for stimulating the entrepreneurship spirit of women and increase the awareness about women’s entrepreneurship, improve the status of women in the national economy (on the labor market, the market of capital, special investment policies, participation of women in the creation of GDP), activities related to completion of education, vocational training, retraining of unemployed women, employment and self-employment, regulating the employment and legal status and the agricultural status of women from rural areas (women farmers), as well as implementation of gender mechanisms on central and local level, in the preparation, planning and implementation of these measures. All of this is also supported in the National Action Plan for Gender Equality geared towards improving the status of women in the labor market.
3. This requires the introduction of the **gender concept** in the creation of the programs and active employment measures targeting special target groups like women beneficiaries of social assistance, family violence victims, victims of human trafficking, long term unemployed women, as well as otherwise socially excluded women like employment redundancies or bankruptcy.

From a **gender perspective**, the increased employment policies need to include measures providing: continuation of the process of harmonization of the legislation with a view of equal opportunities for all genders with the EU legislation; preparation of programs for education and training with an increased participation of women, in order to create greater opportunities for employment in the sectors with insufficient number of women; stimulating women’s entrepreneurship; improvement and development of the network of institutions providing children care.

**Result 4: Creation of equal opportunities for employment of disabled people**

1. Creating **equal opportunities for the disabled people** requires the preparation of special **annual and medium term programs** for rehabilitation and integration of disabled persons on the labor market, which, in turn, will enable their social inclusion in the framework of society. These measures have to be accompanies by financial support on national and local level and this will remedy the imperfections of the market interest for this category of citizens.
2. Subsidizing the employment of disabled persons in order to increase the employability and social inclusion of this category of people and integrate them on the labor market.

**Result 5: Creation of equal opportunities for employment of the elderly (55 – 64 years)**

1. When considering vulnerable groups, one must also have in mind the creation of equal opportunities for growth and employment of **elderly employees** (55 – 64 years), whose unemployment rate is 34.2%.The transition process and their inappropriate qualifications with respect to the modern demands of the labor market (skills and knowledge, especially in the area of information technology), are the main reason for this situation. One strategic objective is to increase the employment rate of the elderly to 41% by 2015. In that context, the application of the model of flexible security should facilitate the employability of these people, as well as the support for training and retraining in vocations which are in demand.
2. The aging of the population can increase the employment rate. However this is not a sustainable solution considering the increased absolute number of pensioners and the reduced number of employees. This suggests the need to **reconcile these unbalanced trends**. Macedonia will have difficulties in achieving the EU projections to increase the employment rate of people between 20 and 64 years of age, to 66% of the total population by 2020, and therefore Macedonia proposes to reach a level of 60%. This may change as a result of the adverse demographic trends and the impact of the crisis, and not as a result of increased productivity and opening of new jobs.

**Result 6:Fulfillment of the constitutional principle of equal representation and adequate representation with respect to employment**

1. Stimulating **policies** that will contribute to increasing the number of employed members of the smaller ethnicities in accordance with their percentage share of the population in the area, in accordance with the stipulations of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.
2. Invest in **programs** for acquiring specific skills and knowledge in accordance with the demands of the labor market. These programs will target people from vulnerable categories and different ethnicities which are underrepresented in the work force. This will create inclusion of the ethnicities on the labor market.

**Result 7 Strengthening of entrepreneurship**

**Entrepreneurship** as driver of market relations and the engagement of production factors undoubtedly requires conditions and support which will implement the system of entrepreneurial involvement of the citizens in all spheres.

1. Providing support to legal entities (small and medium companies and handcrafters) to open new jobs.
2. Stronger **promotion** of financial and other forms of **support of entrepreneurship**, raising of the public awareness about the significance of the entrepreneurship, improving the skills of entrepreneurs, in order to strengthen the competition of the existing companies.
3. Providing support to start-up new businesses and **self-employment**, by providing training to interested unemployed persons on the fundamentals of entrepreneurship, the preparation of sustainable business plans, registration of businesses and providing financial support for starting the business and/or financial support to existing businesses of people registered as unemployed who have experience in the business (from AP employment)
4. Providing **assistance to entrepreneurs** for participating in projects, timely information about published tenders within IPA, FP7 and other EU programs and funds that can be accessed by Macedonian companies and institutions.
5. **Providing support to the business centers, the business incubators and the technical and technological parks**by strengthening the capacity of the existing regional centers, by developing numerous programs which will facilitate new business connections throughout the world. One thing of exceptional importance to the development of the market and the capacities is the establishment of new and supporting of the existing business incubators, which in turn, provides numerous services for the small and medium enterprises.
6. Another important objective is providing support to the **technology transfer centers**. This is done by increasing the awareness about the importance of applying new technology, facilitating the transfer of new technology and development of research and development centers.
7. **The exchange of experiences** about the development and promotion of entrepreneurship, management, negotiation techniques, new marketing strategies, sales methods, modern techniques for conquering new markets and other activities create opportunities for new jobs and greater social inclusion.

**Result 8Engagement of socially unsecured people in the agricultural sector**

1. Increase the number and scope of people that can use state owned agricultural lands (the measure is being implemented successfully and certain categories of people that benefit from social financial assistance have the opportunity to find employment for themselves or members of their families, as well as other persons)
2. Simplify the procedure for issuance of certificates by CSW and appropriate documentation by the Real Estate Cadaster Agencyto the socially unsecured persons so that they can apply for the opportunity to use state owned agricultural land.
3. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy as well as the Agriculture Extension Agency will provide support for the primary agricultural production phase, as well as for the phases of processing and selling the agricultural products, to people receiving social financial assistance benefits.
4. Considering the possibility to apply the above measure in other areas, activities and fields where state owned lands can be given to socially unsecured persons to use, and in return the users will have the obligation to employ people from vulnerable categories.
5. Strengthen the financial and other support to socially unsecured person by advising them on implementing their agricultural business, improving their skills in order to strengthen their competitiveness and the market position.

**Result 9 Formalization of the informal economy**

1. Transformation of the informal economy into the formal economy with active measures and policies compatible and acceptable for market economies.
2. Strengthen the capabilities of the state (and the municipalities) to collect **taxes and other public revenues**. This will create multiple opportunities for creating new jobs and help those excluded from the market, through social protection programs.
3. Apply the **experiences** from certain countries on the various models and methods of transformation of the informal into the formal economy that have yielded results.
4. Provide **opportunities to peopl**e dealing in the informal or the gray economy, to work in the official economy, as well as opportunities to register their business activities by paying certain minimal taxes or lump sums. These individuals would have greater security, not only with respect to their present status, but also in respect to their future revenues, such as pensions, insurance in case of unemployment, social benefits, etc.
5. Conduct a comprehensive **study** that will provide precise systematization of the job categories that exist on the informal market; the characteristics of the “formally unemployed” according to their position on the labor market, level of education completed, ethnicity, place of living, etc.
6. Implement policies and measures to **gradually** register the “gray” businesses in the formal market, including phases that are necessary for the “new” market participant to get accustomed to dealing with the financial burdens, i.e. with the real costs of the formal market. This may include: gradual payments, deferral of obligations for a certain period of time, providing loans at “state – fixed” rates, providing subsidized grants for special purposes related to formalizing the businesses, etc.
7. For certain businesses related to vulnerable categories, one can apply the model involving **quick and cheap registration** (using special, lowest and even symbolic tariffs) of the unregistered small businesses. These businesses will be registered in the so called **“open incubator”** where they could receive support from the central and the local government for a period of three years, after which they would become legal businesses.
8. The regular “formal” businesses that already exist, should not be unprivileged and “stigmatized” and without any compensation, just because of the fact that they are “regular payers”. To show appreciation for those businesses that regularly pay taxes, the state should undertake certain **“financially – sustainable” measures** to “reward” them and get them on board as supporters of the overall market formalization strategy.
9. Implement the measures from the Agricultural Financial Support Program (direct payments) for specific agricultural holdings that have the legal status of “individual farmer”, in order to reduce the gray economy in agriculture.

**Prerequisites**

The following are prerequisites in order to increase the employment rate and harmonize with the European targets:

1. Monitoring the implementation of the employment action plan during the next decade and comparing the outcomes with EU member states with similar characteristics as Macedonia (Slovenia, Lithuania etc.) as the method of best practices.
2. Strengthening the role of the social partners outside of the public sector and strengthening the social dialogue as an instrument for optimizing the relations between employee protection and employer protection.

**The transfer of the informal economy into the formal economy** presupposes several **phases** in resolving this issue, as follows:

1) Creation of **indicators** for monitoring the transfer of informal into formal work, in accordance with the European Union principles.

2) Changes to the **tax system**, the **social insurance** system and other types of incentives and support that will incentivize the unregistered firms to register.

3) The **benefits for starting a business** and the business support should be related to the registered activity. This increases the transfers from the gray to the legal and formal economy.

4) Creation of conditions conducive to the application of relevant **punishments** for creators of illegal businesses, as well as an opportunity to defer punishment if the business is transferred from the informal to the formal sector. The strengthening of the supervision and sanctioning measures against those that work in the gray or black economy, i.e. strengthening the inspection supervision, strengthening the human capacities of the inspection service and the integrated inspection (cooperation and coordination of the labor inspectorate, the market inspectorate, tax inspection and other inspection services) will significantly contribute to the reduction of the informal economy.

6) Provision of a **transition period to persons receiving social assistance benefits**, to legalize their informal businesses, without immediately revoking the benefit. The purpose of this measure is to provide an additional incentive to legalize businesses which will grow and become contributors to the budgets of the country and the municipalities.

**Area 2: Adapting the education to the labor market**

**Education**

The legislation of the Republic of Macedonia offers a good basis for improving the social inclusion through education. Many processes have been initiated, aimed at facilitating the development of strategies and the establishment of mechanisms to use education for advancement of the European integration processes. Some of these processes can be recognized in the recommendations below about the initiated efforts of the society to improve social inclusion with a view of fulfilling the obligations from the EU 2020 Strategy.

Numerous measures, projects and strategies have been enacted, the relevant legislation has been changed, concepts and specific measures (free textbooks, transportation, accommodation and provision of scholarships for the vulnerable groups of students) have been implemented in order to improve the social cohesion and the social inclusion. Various acts have been enacted including the Strategy for Development of Education, the Strategy for Education of Adults, the Concept for Primary Education, the Concept for Vocational Education, the Concept for Occupations, the Concept for Postsecondary Education, the Strategy “Steps to Integrated Education”, Manual for Preventing and Protection Against Discrimination, and various provisions from international conventions and agreements were incorporated in the national legislation. However the education still needs to be modernized and further harmonized with the market demands.

**Labor market**

Education and labor market are interconnected and interdependent. This suggests the need to implement a comprehensive package of coordinated macroeconomic policies, as well as policies for employment at all levels, in order to improve knowledge, the business environment and simplify the administrative procedure for starting a company and company growth. The coordinated macroeconomic policies aim at preserving the current stable environment, but also facilitate a greater dynamics in the economy, based on the requirements from the EU 2020 Strategy and the formation of an inclusive labor market. The commencement of the investment activity based on using domestic resources and educated and capable workforce is a necessary requirement for the establishment of a dynamic economic growth. About 8,400 persons, in the past two years, increased their knowledge and capabilities necessary for employment within the framework of the project “Support for the Employment of Young People, Long Term Unemployed and Women”, financed with a grant from the European Union. Some of them (about 500) managed to find employment as a result of the implementation of these active measures. The assessment suggests that this type of trainings and methods for identification of the needs of the labor market, can achieve much better results and held reduce the number of unemployed persons.

**Strategic objective**

**Provide full inclusion of the students in primary education, provide full inclusion of the secondary education, raise the level of literacy of the population, facilitate education for the vulnerable groups and adapt the education system to the needs of the labor market, strengthen the market potentials for engaging workers at all levels.**

**Results**

The following results should be achieved in order to accomplish this objective:

(1.1) All pupils and students of the appropriate age should be enrolled in primary school and they should complete their primary education.

(1.2) The curriculums and the textbooks should be adapted to the needs of the children with special education needs.

(1.3) The work of the teachers with disabled children should be improved.

(1.4) Improve the access to education for all children.

(2) All students should enroll in secondary schools immediately after the completion of primary education and they should complete their secondary education.

(3) The percentage share of the illiterate population has been reduced and the real literacy has increased as a result of student training in reading and writing and comprehension.

(4) The percentage share of secondary school graduates that enroll in higher education institutions and acquire higher education diplomas has increased.

(5) Conditions have been provided to ling secondary education and the education of adults with the labor market.

(6) The rights of all ethnic communities have been provided in accordance with the Ohrid Framework Agreement in an integrative education system, in order to support the development of a coherent society.

(7) Increasing the number of new jobs and creating conditions for equal access to the labor market for the members of the ethnic communities.

(8) Formation of an inclusive labor market.

(9) Reduction of the unregistered work force.

(10) Improvement of the position of women on the labor market.

**Measures**

**Result 1.1: All pupils and students of the appropriate age should be enrolled in primary school and they should complete their primary education:**

*а. General measures*

1. Consistent application of the legislative requirements regarding the catchment area for each school and providing lists of students of an appropriate age that have to be enrolled in that particular primary school in accordance with its catchment area;
2. In addition to the principle of zoning, the schools should be stimulated to receive students from socially vulnerable families living close to the school, but belong to a different zone (this supervision is done by the SEI). The students should be scoped based on lists submitted by the MOI to the local self-government and in accordance with the field work of the inspectors;
3. Focusing on measures that stimulate enrollment and regular attendance of schools and avoid measures that sanction incompliance with enrollment and attendance requirements.
   1. Stimulate enrollments in kindergartens, as a basis for further schooling, cooperate with nongovernmental organizations and with parents;
   2. Stimulate regular class attendance by:

* Holding additional classes (regulated in the Law on Primary Education, article 27)
* Non-violence in school campaign
* Student and parent advisory
* Free textbooks
* Free transportation
* Financial assistance for disabled persons (transport for the student and the accompanying person)
* Teacher training
* Employment of psychologists, pedagogues and defectologists
* Integrated education strategy
* Social assistance for vulnerable categories
* Improvement of the infrastructure (repair of the toilets, reconstruction, procurement of teaching aids, access ramps for disabled children)
* Adaptation of the curriculums to the age of the students
* Studying the language of the communities.

*b. Special measures for children with developmental impediments*

1. Record the number of children with developmental impediments in the census of the population.
2. Record the children with developmental impediments by providing for cooperation between the municipality, the healthcare institutions and the social institutions.
3. Provide a functional classification of the children with developmental impediments (what can they do), instead of focusing only on the deficiencies (what kind of “damage” they have), in order to properly determine how to integrate them in the regular teaching process. This measure is currently implemented only in the special schools, but should be introduced in the regular schools as well.
4. Include children with developmental impediments in the special classes and schools only when this would serve the best interest of the child (only if it is absolutely necessary for the child’s overall development).
5. Adapt the infrastructure in the regular primary schools to the needs of the children with physical disabilities, including internal interventions, in accordance with the Rule Book on Design Standards and Norms, issued by the Ministry of Transport and Communications and other international norms.
6. Adapt the computer software to the children with disabilities in all the schools where this is necessary,
7. Provide additional financial and staffing benefits for the regular schools that enroll children with developmental impediments, and employ psychologists and defectologists in the schools as needed.
8. Preparation of special programs for primary education of children 11 – 12 years old which have not been included in the primary education system, so that they do not have to wait until they become 15 years old to get included into adult education.

*c. Special education for the Roma children*

1. Provision of funding to facilitate the mandatory inclusion of Roma children and children from other socially vulnerable families into the public school institutions.
2. Awarding monetary assistance to socially vulnerable families if they fulfill certain criteria with respect to the education of their children (conditional cash transfers).
3. Provision of additional financial and staffing benefits for the schools with a significant number of Roma children.
4. Increase the enrollment quotas and provision of scholarships for Roma to study teaching faculties, in particular faculties that prepare primary school teachers.
5. Reduced criteria for enrollment of Roma children in the public secondary schools.
6. Provision of scholarships for Roma students.
7. Provision of mentoring and tutoring for all students/scholarship recipients, as well as other students from the Roma ethnicity in the school they attend. This will help them in the learning process and will help improve the socialization of the students.
8. Introduce mandatory extracurricular activities throughout the school year for all students that have difficulties mastering the teaching materials.
9. Involve the nongovernmental sector in activities conducive to increase the incentives of the Roma parents to send their children to school, with a special emphasis on including girls in the education process.
10. Train teachers to work with and train Roma students

**Result 1.2: The curriculums and the textbooks should be adapted to the needs of the children with special education needs**

1. Adapt the methodology for mastering the teaching language to the needs of the Roma children whose mother tongue is Romani.
2. Provision of a multicultural approach in the textbooks and the teaching materials, by including sections that refer to the history, culture and the tradition of the Roma, which positively reflect the Roma people.
3. The contents of the textbooks need to be improved.
4. Provision of characters and pictures of children with developmental impediments in the textbooks and the teaching materials.

Result 1.3: The work of the teachers with disabled children should be improved

1. Training of existing and future teachers to be able to adapt the teaching to the needs of the children with different capabilities (and especially those with special educational needs), children with risky social backgrounds and from risky cultural backgrounds, and to recognize prejudices manifested towards developmentally challenged children and towards Roma children within the school environment and to fight those prejudices.
2. Provide continuous education of the teaching staff on raising awareness about gender and ethnical equality and eliminating the gender and ethnic stereotypes from the teaching process.
3. Training of teachers – mentors of Roma students
4. Formation of a resource center comprising professionals (at the municipal level) to work with disabled children. These professionals will cooperate with the teachers that work with children with special educational needs.
5. Introduce a system of mentors – teachers and peers – tutors that will work with children with special education needs, as well as Roma students and help them with their education and will contribute to improving their socialization.
6. Application of the developed system of mentoring the work of the teachers, in order to achieve improvement of the performance of children with special educational needs, but also to prevent any type of prejudice against vulnerable children.
7. Give priority to the employment of Roma teachers in schools where a significant share of the students is Roma.

**Result 1.4. Improve the access to education for all children**

1. Introduction of the mandatory free preschool year in kindergartens
2. Increase the number of kindergartens in villages and implement activities to open groups for children in other premises.
3. Improve the access of rural area children to schools by resolving the transportation issue.
4. Introduction of appropriate means of transport for disabled children, including children in wheelchairs, preadaptation of the existing transport network and infrastructure, as well as placement of audiovisual technical equipment.
5. Preadaptation of school buildings in order to facilitate the access for all children, not only to the building, but also within the building itself.

**Result 2: All students should enroll in secondary schools immediately after the completion of primary education and they should complete their secondary education:**

*а. General measures*

1. Expansion and restructuring of the network of secondary schools in a way that will bring it closer to the needs of the students at local level. This will provide students with greater opportunities to choose a secondary school closer to their home.
2. Based on an estimate of the growth of the number of students and the needs of the labor market, the local self-government should expand the network of schools.
3. New vocations and profiles should be introduced in secondary vocational schools based on the needs of the employers and the demands of the labor market.
4. Provision of mechanisms for monitoring the number children that graduated from primary education and how many of them went on to secondary education, in continuous cooperation with the local self-government. The situation can be monitored with the assistance from the State Education Inspectorate and using the data from the electronic journals.
5. Provide compatibility between the teaching curricula from different secondary school in order to facilitate horizontal transferability of the students.

*b. Special measures for children from vulnerable categories*

1. Adaptation of the infrastructure of regular secondary schools to the needs of students with physical disabilities, including internal interventions and not only access ramps.
2. Expansion of the number of vocations offered in the special secondary schools for children with developmental impediments, in addition to the existing ones for students with challenged vision and hearing.
3. Provision of employment privileges to children with developmental impediments after they graduate from secondary education, and development of projects that would foster opportunities to increase the skill level of these children.
4. Awarding monetary assistance to socially vulnerable families if they fulfill certain criteria related to the education of their children (conditional cash transfers).
5. Provision of scholarships for secondary school students coming from vulnerable families.
6. Provision of additional financial and staffing benefits to secondary schools with significant number of Roma students, in the form of free textbooks, free transport and providing accommodation in dormitories.
7. Employment of teacher mentors within the institutions and employment of psychologists, pedagogues and defectologists.
8. Introduction of mandatory extracurricular activities throughout the school year for all students that have difficulties mastering the teaching material.
9. Involvement of the nongovernmental sector and coordination of their activities aimed at providing greater incentives to the Roma, Albanian and Turk parents to educate their female children, and provision of counseling and training of the parents (by printing brochures).
10. Application of the Manual for Nondiscrimination in the Education System of the Republic of Macedonia.

**Result 3: The percentage share of the illiterate population has been reduced and the real literacy has increased as a result of student training in reading and writing and comprehension.**

1. Strengthen the work of the institutions and the nongovernmental sector involved in the education of adults, with respect to implementing programs for basic literacy of people without any formal education and people with incomplete primary education.

* The Law on Adult Education was enacted and the Center for Adult Education was formed for the purpose of implementing this measure;
* The Law on Open Public Universities for Adult Education was enacted, and several public universities for education of adults have been opened;
* Programs for informal adult education are being prepared;
* The implementation of providing basic literacy to the population who needs it, has begun;
* Programs for providing high school equivalency levels are being implemented in the municipalities that have shown interest. These programs are implemented by the Center for Adult Education. After taking the exam, the candidate receives a certificate.
* Trainings of trainers and teachers have been held in order to increase the quality of adult education (CAU in cooperation with DVV).

1. The coverage of girls from rural areas and the different ethnicities in the education system has increased and their dropout rate has reduced.This can be attributed to the enforcement of the Law on Primary Education and the Law on Secondary Education, but also to the measure of counseling the parents.
2. The quality of the education in the mother tongues should increase through the use of an approach focusing on training and acquisition of reading, writing and comprehension skills, as well as printing appropriate references for this purpose.
3. Application of the introduced standardized testing on national level at the end of every elementary education cycle. This will provide an opportunity for every school to track how well it managed to achieve the envisioned teaching objectives, with respect to providing basic literacy to their students.
4. Provision of internationally comparative measures of the population literacy rate.
5. Participation in international testing (TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA) which will facilitate comparisons of our education with that of other countries.

**Result 4: The percentage share of secondary school graduates that enroll in higher education institutions and acquire higher education diplomas has increased.**

1. Undertake all of the previously mentioned activities related to increasing the number of children included in the secondary education.
   * + Mandatory secondary education regulated with the Law on Secondary Education;
     + Establishment of the database;
     + Cooperation with the local self-government, cooperation between primary and secondary schools at local level, cooperation with the SEI with reference to monitoring school attendance of the students, the vertical advancement of students, the dropout rates and undertaking appropriate measures to prevent the adverse consequences, as well as self-evaluation;
     + Mandatory extracurricular activities;
     + Free textbooks, transportation and accommodation of the students;
     + Provision of various scholarships to students;
     + Reform the secondary vocational education (two year, three year and four year education) and introduce attractive vocations and profiles, in accordance with the needs of the labor market, introduction of practical teaching standards;
     + Implementation of the internship project “My Career”;
     + Implementation of research to determine the weaknesses in the education system and undertaking measures to remove the identified weaknesses.
2. Removal of the gender and ethnic stereotypes in the textbooks and teaching materials used in primary and secondary education and introduction of teaching materials that promote gender and ethnic equality. The curriculums and textbooks already contain items and activities conducive to supporting and deepening the process of gender sensitivity, in relation to the education of life skills. Therefore 4680 teachers, from primary and secondary education, were trained, and manuals for implementing the curriculums were drafted.
3. Provision of financial support in the form of free enrollment in university, provision of scholarships, free accommodation in student dormitories and similar assistance to the secondary school graduates coming from socially vulnerable families and who have a high performance and who decided to continue their education or enroll in one of the dispersed faculty study programs.
4. Adaptation of the infrastructure of the faculties to the need of the young people with physical disabilities.
5. Consistent enforcement of the regulations in the area of education which have been harmonized with the provisions from the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Man.

**Result 5: Conditions have been provided to ling secondary education and the education of adults with the labor market.**

1. Adaptation of the reformed secondary vocational education with a view of providing sufficient opportunities for quick and efficient training of the students in practical vocations, in accordance with the demands of the labor market and the European trends.
2. Introduction of mechanisms for regular monitoring and publication of the educational needs of the labor market.
3. Adaptation of the curriculums to the needs of the labor market, by introducing attractive vocations and profiles and practical teaching standards.
4. Introduction of new education profiles and implementation of rapid retraining courses for employment through the EARM
5. Realization of short courses for completion of existing training and retraining within the framework of the activities of the Center for Adult Learning
6. Introduction of successful mechanisms for cooperation with companies and employers.
7. Development of programs for training and retraining adapted to the needs of different target groups, in accordance with the needs of the labor market.
8. Expansion of the network of verified organizations and individuals that can implement training and retraining of adults, in accordance with the needs of the labor market and monitoring their work.
9. Implementation of the Manual on the Verification of Special Adult Education Programs and the Manual for Licensing of Institutions for Adult Education, for the purpose of verifying the educational institutions.
10. Verification of the special adult education programs that lead to obtaining a certificate.
11. Ensuring that the certificates obtained after completing the training or retraining, are competitive on the labor market.

**Result 6:The rights of all ethnic communities have been provided in accordance with the Ohrid Framework Agreement, in an integrative education system, in order to support the development of a coherent society.**

1. Undertaking of activities to reduce the divisions along ethnic lines at all levels of the education system, including the administrative structures.
2. Organization of extracurricular activities for the purposes of providing better understanding and knowledge of the languages, the culture, the customs, in order to raise awareness that the integrative education system is a key element of a coherent multiethnic society.
3. Building awareness about the needs for tolerance on all grounds.
4. Education of persons from all ethnicities with all due respect for the differences and characteristics that exist.

**Result 7: Increasing the number of new jobs for the vulnerable groups.**

1. Continuous and increased opening of new jobs through structural changes and intensifying of the activities that lead to new job creation, all the while respecting the principle of equal and appropriate representation of all ethnicities, in accordance with the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and especially of the vulnerable groups and the Roma.
2. Recognize the differences and the characteristics arising from the market demands which have to be complied with, as well as the different levels of education, the age and gender characteristic, with a view of building policies for social inclusion of the vulnerable categories of citizens.

**Result 8: Formation of an inclusive labor market.**

1. Formation of an inclusive labor market through investments in human capital, with a view of adapting the knowledge and the skills to the modern digital requirements and knowledge.
2. Development of active and preventive measures for the labor market, identification of the needs of the labor market, and providing support to the job seekers, as well as training and incentives to actively seek a job.
3. Supporting personal initiatives to establish small and medium companies as the most vital segment for opening of new jobs and family businesses.
4. Systemic formation of social entrepreneurship, development of legislation for social enterprises and social economy, in order to provide employment to persons from vulnerable groups.
5. Increase the access to employment by promoting financial support through micro-credit and tax breaks.
6. Development of projects for employment in the local communities and strengthening of the awareness of citizens about increasing the inclusiveness of the labor market.
7. Development of measures and mechanisms for dealing with market segmentation by promoting adaptability for sustainability and promoting work through the application of the labor legislation and the social dialogue.
8. Improve the access to good quality social services and create integrated and coordinated services, with the participation of the users, in order to satisfy the needs of the people.

**Result 9: Reduction of the unregistered work force.**

1. Establish incentives for full time employment (or part time employment),
2. Regulate the labor of non-resident workers,
3. Regulate the payment of average salaries and the longevity of the labor engagements,
4. Continuous monitoring of the enforcement of the legislative provisions referring to non-reporting the work force.

**Result 10: Improvement of the position of women on the labor market.**

1. Strengthen the activities in the area of prevention, by education and provision of information to the employed women about their rights.
2. Continuous visits and creation of mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the legislative provisions applicable in case of infringement of employee’s rights.
3. Training of the labor inspectors on gender awareness.
4. Reduction of the gender discrimination on the labor market (access to work and at the work place) and increase the level of enforcement of the legislative provisions referring to gender based discrimination.
5. Greater efficiency regarding the enforcement of the provisions from the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Man.
6. Incorporation of the gender concept in the education system and the system for providing children’s care.
7. Promoting and strengthening of the gender equality mechanisms on the national and local level, by having a greater number of initiatives for reducing the risk of social exclusion of women, with a special emphasis on women from ethnic communities and women from rural areas, in cooperation with the nongovernmental sector.
8. Promotion and application of the mechanisms for protection in cases on unequal treatment of women and man;
9. Promotion of the legislation and the strategic documents in the area of gender equality, with a special emphasis on measures and policies for reducing the inequality in the treatment between the men and women and reducing the risk of social exclusion.

**Prerequisites**

The measures and activities in the area of employment which, to a certain extent, influence the mitigation of unemployment continue to be applicable and constitute a part of the need to improve the access to the labor market. This refers particularly to the active employment measures and programs which have yielded results in the past few years. In addition, the main challenges for the macroeconomic policy in the area of the labor market will arise from the following:

1. The nominal (and real) convergence to the European Union and therefore the labor market access policies have to adapt and harmonize, in the early stages of coordination, with the policies of the European countries, in particular the guidelines stipulated in the EU 2020 Strategy,

2. The national action priorities should be harmonized and should correspond to those identified in the EU 2020 Strategy with a view of maintaining employment, increase the labor force supply and modernize the social protection systems; improve the adaptability of the employees and the companies; and to increase the investments in human capital by improving the process of acquiring modern knowledge and skills, adapted to the needs of the domestic labor market.

3. These European objectives have to be realized in accordance with the policies created and promoted on macroeconomic and systemic level in the Republic of Macedonia with a view of developed dynamism and higher economic and social performances.

The policies and measures aimed at increasing the employment and the flexibility of the labor market are the main priorities identified in the Work Program of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as in other strategic documents, and especially in the National Strategy for Employment of the Republic of Macedonia 2015 and the Operational Plan for the Active Employment Programs and Measures for the period 2012-2013.

The decentralization of the opportunities for employment by preparing local action plans for employment and continuous implementation of active programs and measures for employment targeted towards specific target groups (young people, long term unemployed, women, older people, vulnerable persons), became a necessity that has to be fulfilled. This especially applies to the employment of unemployed persons and socially excluded persons on national and on municipal level and on the level of individuals, as well as through strengthening of social entrepreneurship, which unleashes the forces and the potentials for engaging every individual for a more efficient, but also more cost effective state and social cohesion.

**Area 3: Social and child protection, construction of a new social model**

The objectives and the policies regarding social protection are considered among the most important priorities of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. Some of these measures are included in the system of social protection and these include elements of prevention, institutional protection and different types of social assistance and social protection. The policies and the commitments that the Government is implementing are specified in numerous strategic documents and operational programs which lead to change in accordance with the European guidelines. Other significant elements of this process are the international documents, conventions and recommendation such as the Strategy for Social Cohesion of the European Committee for Social Cohesion, the UN Millennium Developmental Goals with respect to the first developmental goal of poverty reduction and other recommendations implemented for the purpose of gradual harmonization with the legislation of the EU.

The children that live in poverty are exposed to a higher risk of social exclusion because the lack of resources usually limits their education and development opportunities and subsequently precludes them from participating in the economic, social and cultural and cultural life in their society.

All activities aimed at satisfying the material requirements of the people, facilitating their participation in society and the societal processes and the strengthening of the social unity, are the desired objectives of a social model of every country where social inclusion is a part of the processes for realization of a welfare state. The quality and the quantity of the inclusion do not depend only on the material level or the level of development of a given society, but also on the extent of acceptance and full realization of the social needs of the population.

**Strategic objective**

**Establishment of a social protection system for the poorest citizens, provision of access to institutional and other forms of protection and strengthening of the capacities of the social protection system.**

**Protection of children and equal access to healthcare and education and informing the children about their rights.**

**Reduction of poverty and social depravity through the formation of a new social model and concept, oriented around the individual and his/her needs.**

**Results**

The following results need to be achieved in order to accomplish the objectives related to social and children’s protection, reduction of poverty and social depravity:

* 1. Protection of the poorest citizens;
  2. Provision of access to institutional and other forms of protection;
  3. Strengthening of the social protection system;
  4. Protection of the children from socially excluded family and children at risk;
  5. Protection of children that use or abuse drugs and other psychotropic substances and precursors;
  6. Improvement of healthcare and providing equal access to healthcare for all children;
  7. Informing the children about the Convention of the Rights of Children;
  8. Implementation of measures to support the socially disadvantaged;
  9. Formation of a new acceptable social model

**Measures**

**Result 1. Protection of the poorest citizens:**

1. Identification of the poverty line in the Republic of Macedonia, in accordance with the achieved level of economic development and the realistic capacities of the country;
2. It is expected that the number of people that have not effectuated their right to receive a pension based on the number of years they have worked, will increase in the nearest future, primarily as a result of the long bankruptcy procedures and the irregular and inappropriate regulation of the obligation related to payment of pension contributions by employers before the introduction of the gross salary concept. Therefore we propose to include these old people in the social protection system and provide them with social financial assistance equal to the minimum subsistence level in the Republic of Macedonia.
3. The existing modalities for protection of homeless persons should provide for premises for temporary admission of acutely sick homeless persons.
4. The efforts of the country to actively include the single parents and the members of the different ethnic communities on the labor market should continue by developing affirmative action policies while complying with criteria for employing staff of sufficient quality.
5. Revise and amend the legislative provisions which are somewhat restrictive with respect to providing social financial assistance to single parents.

**Result 2.Provision of access to institutional and other forms of protection:**

1. Promotion of the inter sector cooperation in the area of child protection.
2. Implementing a continuous campaign regarding the obligation to register newborn children, as a basis for the children to acquire the rights stipulated in the Convention for Child Protection.
3. Special measures for protection and treatment of children and women who are victims of family violence.
4. Continuous protection and treatment of children and women who are victims of sexual violence.
5. Creation of social protection programs targeted to helping and supporting children that abuse drugs.
6. Additions of provisions to the Law on Local Self-Government for providing care for the elderly people (for example: opening of small day centers for the elderly)
7. Provision of a patronage service for provision care and assistance to the elderly in their homes.
8. Introduction of a social map of the groups at risk on the level of communities.
9. In addition to the existing services providing protection of families in the communities, facilitate the development of small group homes and counseling facilities for parents.
10. Opening of counseling facilities for perpetrators of family violence and shelters for family violence victims of various genders and various age groups(presently such facilities only for women with children).
11. Strengthening of the access and the coordination of the services for re-socialization, reintegration and economic strengthening of the victims of family violence and human trafficking.
12. Implementation of preventive activities and services with respect to the abuse of drugs and other psychotropic substances.
13. Special support to disabled persons by providing them personal assistants (refers to programs for employment and training).

**Result 3. Strengthening of the social protection system**

1. Development of the profile of a patrol social worker whose responsibility will focus on improving the position of individuals and their families in the field, particularly in the urban and rural poverty quarters.
2. Building of capacities based on competence and expertize should be the core method of providing appropriate staff for the state administration institutions on local and national level.
3. Employment of social workers in the psychological and pedagogical department of primary and secondary schools (this activity was envision with the changes to the Law on Primary Education from August 2008, however it was not implemented in practice due to lack of finances).
4. The legislation needs to be revised in order to identify and remove the restrictive legislative provisions that restrict the right to social protection and provision of assistance to single parents, especially mothers.
5. Raising awareness about gender aspects and strengthening the capacities of the employment agencies as well as the social protection services.
6. Implement mechanisms for designing a supervisory service that will assist the social institutions, i.e. prepare an appropriate methodology.
7. Close cooperation with other governmental bodies involved in the process of service delivery (with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education) and building of a strategy and policies for development of partnership models between the nongovernmental sector and the state.

**Result 4: Protection of the children from socially excluded family and children at risk**

1. Implementing a program for providing information and education, especially to the Roma population, with respect to registering new births and provision of the necessary documentation for the newborns.
2. Continuous activities for registering all unregistered children and providing the necessary assistance in the procedure for registration in the register of newborns (as well as tracking their parents).
3. Intersectoral cooperation with respect to promoting the protection of children and adopting intersectoral cooperation protocols which will clearly define the obligations and the types of cooperation with the participants.
4. Design inclusion programs focusing on street children and institutionalize children.
5. Formation of special measures for protection and treatment of children victims of family and sexual violence;
6. Support the opening of day centers for school age children and introducing a new profile for social workers, i.e. field social workers (such a profile has been introduce in the capital and provides good results).
7. Regulate the protection of children in fostering families, by improving their abilities through continuous education, supervision, evaluation and monitoring of these families, with a special emphasis on families that foster disabled children.
8. Reduce the number of documents required to receive monetary benefits and increase the level of the benefits envisioned in the Law on Social Protection and the Law on Protection of Children.
9. Consider the possibility of making the child be the holder of the child allowance benefit, instead of one of the parents.
10. Introduce legal provisions that will enable parents who are unemployed, i.e. register in the Employment Agency, benefit from the child allowance benefit as a guaranteed income for the children in such families.
11. The child allowance benefit should be also provided to families that receive social assistance.

**Result 5: Protection of children that use or abuse drugs and other psychotropic substances and precursors**

1. Implementing measures for timely detection, prevention and monitoring of children abusing drugs and other psychotropic substances.
2. Opening a special Center for treating children that use and abuse drugs and other psychotropic substances and precursors.
3. Develop programs for prevention of drug use, with special emphasis on children outside of the regular education system.
4. Educate teams from the social centers that will work in the field and detect these children and undertake all the necessary steps to treat them.

**Result 6: Improvement of healthcare and providing equal access to healthcare for all children**

1. Continue implementing the measures for reducing infant mortality, especially among the socially vulnerable groups.
2. Implement measures for improving the accessibility to health services and to medicines from the positive list of medicines.

**Result 7: Informing the children about the Convention of the Rights of Children**

1. Introducing a special program for informing the children and the parents with the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) and the two optional CRC protocols, in the primary schools, so that the children become familiar with the rights they have and be able to recognize possible violations.
2. Continuous dissemination of CRC and the two optional protocols
3. More visible campaigns for raising the awareness about the significance of the CRC and the two optional protocols

**Result 8: Implementation of measures to support the socially disadvantaged**

1. Relaxing the requirements for inclusion in education and the possibilities to get an education, by **covering the costs** of education.
2. **Enable the young people** and the members of the ethnic communities to acquire a higher level of modern education which will help them exit the zone of unqualified workforce, which is not attractive on the labor market.
3. Financial support for maintaining proper **hygienic and sanitary status** of persons and families that are poor, instituting free health examinations (prevention of spreading of diseases, etc.).
4. Provision of **social assistance** to people who really need it (unregistered persons, unrecorded persons, starving persons, etc.), taking into account the number of children in the family.
5. Creation of **good quality access** to the opportunities under the competences of the government with respect to various types of services from institutions (health, education, culture, sport, entertainment etc.).
6. **Mapping** the social organizations and enterprises, as well as determining their capacities, structure, and services in order to identify the potential (material and human) for institutional and other forms of social inclusion.
7. Determine **indicators for monitoring the energy poverty** and the variables that determine it and the index of energy poverty, and develop measures for reducing and/or eliminating the reasons for energy poverty.
8. Participation of relevant representatives, members of ethnic communities and poor persons in the **preparation and coordination of the social inclusion policies**. The nongovernmental sector should be supported do relocate the services it offers to locations where they are needed, by providing them with sufficient capacities for providing day care services.

**Result 9: Formation of a new acceptable social model**

1. **Formation of an acceptable social model**, with restricted influences of the market imperfections and, in their stead, the institutions, especially the national authorities, as well as the local governments, should shape the social processes; assist the socially vulnerable layers of the population without jeopardizing the incentives for employment.
2. Provision of **social security** that will reduce or eliminate social exclusion. References to European or other experiences of the European social model do not help us move away from the national specifics.[[4]](#footnote-5)
3. Formation of a **functional and sustainable social model** that will not produce poverty and exclusion, but will promote social inclusion and growth of the material status of the citizens.
4. Stimulating the **sustainability of programs and policies** which generate employment and social inclusion.
5. Identification of the **target groups** that would be observed and be subject to measures and policies of social inclusion, through a permanent system for resolving the problems of socially excluded people. Including other groups in the observation process would reduce poverty and strengthen social inclusion.
6. Provide conditions for introducing an **adequate minimal income** that will be sufficient to satisfy a minimal living standard of the citizens.

**Prerequisites**

The following are the **necessary prerequisites** to overcome poverty:

1) Building a **system for continuous measurement** made up of harmonized parameters and data sources comparable to the indicators used in the European Union to assess the poverty line.

2) Establishing a nationally accepter or adopted **definition for social exclusion**, which would be used to analyze social exclusion, to simplify the methodological procedures, but also more clearly define the policies that would be implemented in this area.

3) **Identifying mechanisms, conditions and means** to provide timely assistance to people facing poverty (urban and rural),

4) **Include the following into the socially excluded categories**: employees with especially low incomes, poor people from rural areas, women from the ethnic communities that live in rural areas, treatment of the urban poverty, children of larger families (with 3 or more children) especially if their parents are not employed, and institutionalized children.

5)Provision of new mobile, deinstitutionalized **services to multiple categories of socially excluded groups** (out of the existing ones), especially to older people, as well as increasing the number of day centers that provide care for the homeless as well as the street children.

6) Increase **the accessibility to resources**, rights and services necessary for people living in geographically remote regions to participate in society. This may include mobile services, health examinations, food supply, facilitation of requirements to participate in trainings and other activities.

7) Strengthen the active **social inclusion of unemployed young people** that are not in the education and training system and therefore they are not interesting for the labor market.

8) Identify opportunities and conditions for providing funds which would be used to secure an **adequate minimal income** that could be used to provide a minimal standard of living of the citizens.

An agreement has been reached about the level of the minimum income, i.e. a **minimum wage has been defined**, as an indicator which largely raises the issues related to poverty on a quantitative basis, and which is necessary and exists in most of the European countries, which is a basis for further planning and undertaking measures and activities in this sphere.

The delineation of **measures for different groups of poor people** becomes a necessity in order to see the effects of each of these different measures. The needs of each of these groups are different and the measures for them need to be different, namely: а) special emphasis needs to be provided to training and counseling services for the category of people defined as new poor, b) There is a need of greater accessibility to the financial transfers for the category of people defined as traditionally, and chronically poor; c) better dissemination of information.

**Area 4: Promoting healthcare and long term care**

The provisions stipulated in the Health Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia until 2020 determine the measures and activities for strengthening the health system, while the other strategic documents contain short term and medium term activities that have to be implemented in order to feel the effects of those measures on the health of the population.

Since the enactment of the National Strategy, significant changes have been accomplished in the system, with the enactment of the Law on Health Protection, in particular in areas of patient rights and health insurance. In addition, significant funding has been invested in the healthcare sector, in particular in equipment, knowledge and resources, in order to improve the quality of the health services and increase the access to healthcare for all citizens. The activities envisioned in the Operational Programs for Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion, in the area of healthcare, have been incorporated in the annual preventive and curative programs of the Ministry of Health and all of them have been implemented.

Therefore, priorities are proposed, that will help social inclusion with respect to healthcare.

The situation with the access to, and quality of the services for long term care in the country suggest a series of problems and challenges that require attention and implementation of appropriate measures and activities with respect to institutional and other types of protection.

**Strategic objective**

**Promote the access to and the quality of the healthcare services for the socially excluded groups, as well as the access to good quality services for long term care for the socially vulnerable and excluded groups, in accordance with the standards and the practices of the EU.**

**Results**

The following results need to be achieved in order to accomplish this objective:

1. Effectuation of the rights of patients;
2. Elimination of the inequalities in healthcare and provision of an equal access to healthcare;
3. Improvement of the standards and the quality of healthcare (further investments in space, equipment, staff);
4. Provision of adequate healthcare to the vulnerable groups of people;
5. Promotion of the access to healthcare for people without health insurance or appropriate personal documentation;
6. Creation of conditions for equal access to services for long term care by creating legal frameworks and an assessment of the needs of the users;
7. Improve the physical and infrastructure conditions for long term care and the educational level of the professional staff in the institutions providing long term care, in accordance with the national and European standards;
8. Increased access to services for long term care, through an efficient decentralization of these services and promotion of public – private partnerships and creation of a system that will facilitate standardization and training of staff for long term care;
9. Promotion and strengthening of the long term care provided outside of institutions and promoting the right to choose, through public campaigns, as well as creation of a sustainable financial system with measures that will secure reliable funding for the sustainability of the long term care model.

**Measures**

**Result 1: Effectuation of the rights of patients**

1. Assessment of the situation with discrimination in healthcare and development of proposed measures for suppressing and preventing it, as well as training for the healthcare and auxiliary personnel, training the counselors for protection of the rights of patients.
2. Facilitate access to the counselors for protection of the rights of patients in all hospital institutions, and inform the citizens about the existence of this facility, in accordance with the Law on Protection of the Rights of Patients.
3. Formation of commissions for protection and promotion of the rights of patients in the units of local self-government (in accordance with the Law) and training them about the healthcare related rights and the principles of nondiscrimination incorporated in the existing regulation.
4. Targeted dissemination of information to the vulnerable groups with respect to the rights in healthcare and especially the right to nondiscrimination, in cooperation with the responsible institutions and the civil sector. This area can also include the promotion of sexual and reproductive health, as well as individual activities like:

1). Preparation and implementation of programs for health education in the area of reproductive health (strengthening the mechanisms for registration of the use of contraceptives and the number of performed abortions in the private and public health), the course of pregnancy, early child development, significance of breastfeeding, general education, the place of living, and social layers,

2). Promotion of the existing preventive programs (cervical cancer, breast cancer, ovary cancer), by intensifying the dissemination of information about the available services,

3). Continuous education (especially of the young population from different ethnicities and rural areas, and other vulnerable groups) on the use of contraceptives, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and family planning.

1. Formulating newsletters and information leaflets targeted to different vulnerable and socially excluded groups.
2. Monitoring the work of the counselors for protection of the rights of patients, with a special emphasis on how the vulnerable groups can exercise their rights to healthcare.
3. Preparation of a registry of civil organizations working in the sphere of health policies and healthcare and involvement of the civil sector (association of citizens and foundations) in the detection, elimination and prevention of the discrimination against the vulnerable and socially excluded groups, in the area of healthcare.

**Result 2: Elimination of the inequalities in healthcare and provision of an equal access to healthcare (geographic, financial, physical):**

1. Analysis of the existing records in healthcare with respect to the problems and needs of the vulnerable groups and proposing methods for tracking and overcoming these problems and needs.
2. Identification of the persons and families, especially from vulnerable groups that do not have access to healthcare. This will be done by means of field visits (patronage services). The identified persons and families will be informed about the access to healthcare and health insurance, as well as the access to free healthcare services in the preventive healthcare (immunization, screening programs, etc.).
3. Introduction of the system of medical records, in accordance with the Law on Healthcare Records. The records in this system can be sorted on the basis of ethnicity, religion and economic status.

**Result 3: Improvement of the standards and the quality of healthcare (further investments in space, equipment, staff):**

1. Provision of training on gender and other types of awareness raising, to the medical and auxiliary personnel in the healthcare institutions, with respect to the needs of the population and the different vulnerable groups.
2. Introduction of a system for monitoring the quality of the healthcare services and a system for accreditation of healthcare institutions, in accordance with the standardized conditions for healthcare quality.

**Result 4: Provision of adequate healthcare to the vulnerable groups of people:**

1. Providing physical and service accessibility to the healthcare institutions for people with various disabilities (physical disabilities, people with challenged hearing or sight, etc.).
2. Identify measures to promote the availability of the healthcare services in rural areas.
3. Strengthening of the system of patronage visits to families, especial in the rural and Roma communities, adequate implementation of the healthcare patronage activities as a prerequisite for providing good quality healthcare to children,to pregnant women during pregnancy and immediately after delivery.
4. Introduction of Roma health mediators in the communities where such a need has been identified (in accordance with the health statistics), according to the defined professional profile, working tasks and scope of the field activities to be performed by an RHM. Employment of the RHMs in the health system starting with 15 RHMs in the first year, and gradually increasing their number in the subsequent years until the population is adequately covered with healthcare services and RHMs.
5. Development of a register of civil society organizations that work in the sphere of health policies and healthcare.
6. Implementation of measures to improve the accessibility to health services and to medicines from the positive list of medicines, by reducing the maximum amount of the copayment that the insured persons have to pay.
7. Introducing foster home housing of persons with chronic mental illnesses and centers for prevention and treatment of LID.
8. Strengthening of institutional capacities by creating trained staff to provide adequate healthcare to vulnerable groups (children and adolescents, women, Roma, persons with mental disorders, disabled persons, persons living with HIV/AIDSand persons that have not used their right to health insurance).

**Result 5: Promotion of the access to healthcare for people without health insurance or appropriate personal documentation:**

1. Monitoring of the enforcement of the regulation about the effectuation of the right to health insurance on the basis of the Law on Health Insurance, in order to simplify the procedure related to the rights of these people and the documentation that they have to submit.
2. Coordinated inter sector cooperation between the civil society organizations and the responsible institutions with respect to the identification and exchange of information about people that do not have proper documentation and therefore cannot effectuate their right to health insurance.
3. Utilization of the system for free legal aid to people that cannot receive health insurance based on the Law on Health Insurance.
4. Inform the public and fully inform the vulnerable groups (along with the civil society sector) about the existence of the opportunity to effectuate the right to health insurance for people who do not have health insurance.
5. Monitor the situation of people with unregulated status and without proper personal documentation with respect to their access to health insurance.

**Result 6: Creation of conditions for equal access to services for long term care by creating legal frameworks and an assessment of the needs of the users:**

*Promoted and harmonized legislation*

* 1. Preparation of changes and interventions to the Law on Social Protection, Law on Education, Law on Misdemeanors, which would facilitate access to long term care.
  2. Enactment of bylaws on the establishment of long term care service facilities.

*Mapping and assessment of the groups for long term care*

1. Research and preparations on local level for the needs of long term care and defining the socially excluded groups.
2. Preparation of local action plans for the development of the long term care.
3. Introduction of a unified system for the development of long term care services and facilities.

**Result 7: Improve the physical and infrastructure conditions for long term care and the educational level of the professional staff in the institutions providing long term care, in accordance with the national and European standards:**

*Building the capacities of the institutions and all stakeholders responsible for long term care*

1. Increase the number of homes for old and decrepit people, in accordance with the local level needs.
2. Provide technical equipment and accessibility to the institutions and the long term care facilities.
3. Education and awareness raising of the stakeholders (local government, service providers) that will be directly involved in providing long term care services.
4. Provide training and awareness raising about gender equality to the human resources and the long term care teams.
5. Develop a national program for rehabilitation that will be available to all persons with disabilities depending on their special needs.

**Result 8: Increased access to services for long term care, through an efficient decentralization of these services and promotion of public – private partnerships.**

*Coordination and referral mechanisms*

1. Protocol for cooperation on national and local level
2. Standardization of the quality of long term care services provided in the field of healthcare and social protection.
3. Training of the stakeholders in using the local level mechanisms.
4. Formation of a unified electronic system for monitoring and receiving feedback about the support of the long term care model at local level.
5. Involvement of the private sector through public-private partnerships with a view of creating new and innovative methods for long term care in cooperation with the local communities.
6. Establishment of a coordinating body with a multidisciplinary composition and approach to the implementation and monitoring of the long term care model.

*Standardization of the quality of the long term care services*

1. Establishment of normative standards and bylaws for long term care in institutions and in a home environment.
2. Establishment of regulatory mechanisms for accreditation, licensing, monitoring and evaluation of the services.
3. Establishment of standards and good practices with respect to professional ethics for the service providers and a supervision system.
4. Monitoring of the satisfaction of the users of the long term care services in institutions or in a home environment.
5. Transparency of the reports on the use of long term care services.

*Building human resource capacities for long term care*

1. Training and retraining of human resources in the provision of long term care (members of families, volunteers, and young people) in institutions and elsewhere.
2. Education of people requiring long term care and the people at risk of requiring long term care, on healthy lifestyles, active involvement in problem resolution, involvement in various preventive programs and timely release from hospitals, with a view of reducing the need for long term care.
3. Training of the professional staff on how to provide long term care services in institutions.
4. Introduction of the long term care model in the curricula for secondary and tertiary education and promoting and implementation of the gender concept.

**Result 9: Promotion and strengthening of the long term care provided outside of institutions and promoting the right to choose, through public campaigns, as well as creation of a sustainable financial system with measures that will secure reliable funding for the sustainability of the long term care model.**

*Strengthening of the long term care provided outside of institutions*

1. Development of a network and accredited programs of alternative services in a home environment that will be accessible in rural areas.
2. Increase the number of mobile teams providing palliative care with an interdisciplinary approach.
3. Special training on palliative care for fostering families.
4. Strengthening the existing forms of providing protection outside of the institutions (opening of 3-4 day centers for old people, formation of 7 small group homes for disabled people).

*Raising of the public awareness about the access to services and nondiscrimination*

1. Provide more information to the public about the social services, as a prerequisite for integration of the socially excluded groups in society.
2. Campaigns for raising of public awareness of the population about long term care.
3. Education of the young people about how to behave towards socially excluded groups.
4. Provision and promotion of the right of service users to choose what king of long term care they will receive.
5. Promotion of the gender concept in the long term care and reduction of the double discrimination of people that use long term care services.

*Provision of reliable funding that will ensure sustainability of the long term care model*

1. Enact a rule book with standards and services.
2. Define the cost of the service as a function of the type of service.
3. Implement measures for allocating funds from the pension and disability insurance pillars.
4. Participation/co-financing of the services by the service user depending on their income and the level of risk.
5. Adding the service involving care by a third party to the long term care model.
6. The service provider should prepare an annual financial plan.

**Prerequisites**

**1. Institutional support and assistance**

The implementation of the above mentioned activities and the accomplishment of the long term priorities of the Social Inclusion Strategy in the area of healthcare require the organization of institutional supports that can be achieved through either the existing or the newly formed institutions. In addition to the healthcare institutions on central and local levels, responsible for implementing the activities and addressing the problems and needs of the vulnerable groups, it is necessary to introduce new forms of support, especially at local level, i.e. in the communities, for acceptance, integration and re-socialization of certain vulnerable groups. In addition to the existing forms of re-socialization and reintegration of these groups, the assessment suggests that the existing capacities are not sufficient, and for certain categories of vulnerable groups (like the substance addicts) there are no capacities whatsoever. Hence the following forms of institutional support and community support are envisioned in the field of healthcare and improvement of the health of the vulnerable groups:

* 1. Foster housing for people with problems with their mental health and other mental disabilities;
  2. Social clubs in the communities for re-socialization of the vulnerable groups and support for their social involvement, education and other activities;
  3. Institutions/center for providing care and assistance to persons that inject drugs or are addicted to other substances that cause addictions, with a view of help with the quick and successful reintegration and re-socialization of this vulnerable group;
  4. Increase the number of day centers for mental health which support the social engagement and education of this vulnerable group.

In addition, the intersectoral issues related to gender, ethnic and social affiliation should be especially emphasized within the framework of this strategy as a complex of issues that are closely correlated with the health and institutional support and assistance.

**2. Social inclusion in healthcare**

The priorities in the area of healthcare will be achieved with continuous and good quality realization of the previously mentioned measures and activities, as well as with the normative acts that regulate the specific rights, obligations and responsibilities of everyone involved in this process. The basic prerequisite for the implementation of these normative acts are:

1. Inform the professional and the broader public about the legal effectuation of the normative act and the significance of the provisions it contains. It is insufficient to publish the act in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia which is only formally accessible to everyone.
2. Train the entities responsible for enforcing the regulation, including appropriate dissemination of information to the public.
3. Train the authorities responsible for supervising the enforcement of the regulation and
4. Functioning of the systems for protection of the rights established with the legal and judicial system of the Republic of Macedonia (including institutions outside of the health system: judiciary, ombudsman etc.).

The reduction of poverty and social exclusion are also under the influence of the following programs: Program for Mandatory Health Insurance of Citizens of the Republic of Macedonia not Covered by the Mandatory Health Insurance System; the National Annual Public Health Program; Program for Active Healthcare for Mothers and Children; Program for Early Detection of Malignant Conditions; Program for Preemptive Measures for Prevention of Tuberculosis among the Population; Program for Protection of the Population against AIDS; Project for Roma Health Mediators etc.

3. Undertaking legal measures and acts that will facilitate equal access to the long term care services for the socially excluded and vulnerable groups by promoting deinstitutionalization of the services and provision of assistance in a home environment and in the institutions. Development of a program for decentralization of the long term care services and improvement of the physical and infrastructure conditions pertinent to long term care in cooperation with the units of local self-government and CSW.

4. Undertaking measures for standardized programs and services, education of professionals and family members which will provide the services of long term care in a home environment. Provide improvement through partnerships with the public institutions directly involved in long term care. Raise the public awareness of the population for promoting the model for long term care and the right of the patients to choose which services they will use.

5. Develop and promote a sustainable financial model for long term care. Develop public – private partnership, concessions primarily for the homes for the elderly (above 65 years of age) and the chronically ill persons in cooperation with the units of local self-government. Promotion of alternative programs and services related to long term care in cooperation with NGOs, religious organizations, individuals, CSW, local communities etc.

**Area 5: Transport, Communications and Housing**

The social exclusion of certain parts of the population in the area of transport is multidimensional.It includes spatial, temporal, financial and personal aspects such as personal/physiological or psychological inability or fear to use certain means of transportation. There are three major categories that can be considered socially excluded from transport: the poor people, disabled people, and people living in remote regions. The accessibility and mobility aspects are also included in the national Transport Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia and the measures from there correspond and apply in this area.

The lack of access to information and communication technologies prevents the technologically poor people to participate in social activities. This also produces cascading influence on the excluded people because the population which is technologically poor becomes even poorer. This happens because the governmental bodies, community organizations and business entities shift more and more of their resources from traditional communications channels to the internet. The information technology inequality and the related elements pertinent to social exclusion are usually correlated with the gap between the different segments of society, i.e. those who have access to any ICT or medium and those that do not.

The social exclusion in housing represents a complex social phenomenon strongly correlated to the other forms of social marginalization. The three fundamental barriers to decent housing – economic, cultural and legal – are simultaneously correlated with the persons that face this type of social exclusion, but also to locations that are marginalized because of a specific set of social circumstances. This is mostly manifested as substandard or poor housing, including lack of access to sources of financing to improve the housing conditions, or as legal insecurity, primarily related to the large number of illegal buildings in the country.

**Strategic objective**

**To reduce the inequality related to transport and access to the transportation system and, at the same time, increase the quality of services provided by the transport system.**

**To implement an information society for all, i.e. a broad and effective participation in the community with the help of the information and communication technologies for the categories of people deemed socially excluded in this area – primarily people with low income levels, the elderly, disabled people, the rural population (due to the inadequacy of the communication infrastructure available to them) and the persons with lower levels of education.**

**To achieve standardized and harmonious housing conditions for the categories of people deemed to be socially excluded in the area of housing: children without parents or parental care, beneficiaries or social or permanent financial assistance, disabled persons and persons requiring care and assistance of third parties, persons from the Roma communities, socially vulnerable and single parents with minor children.**

**Results**

To accomplish this objective in the transportation, the following results need to be achieved:

1. The organization, quality and quantity of the public transport services for groups that are socially excluded with respect to transport should be improved;
2. The access to transport system should be improved;
3. The access to computer aided communications, meaning a permanent access to internet from home, the workplace or a public location, should be improved;
4. The quality with which the specific social categories use the potential of computer aided communications, i.e. use the communications, distribution and transaction function, should be improved;
5. The level of substandard housing conditions should be reduced;
6. The overcrowding of homes, which leads to less than optimal active residential area per household member, should be reduced;
7. The spatial segregation of ethnic and other types of communities, as a consequence of existing cultural and social matrices, should be suppressed;
8. The risk of losing the resident status(tenant status) due to legal uncertainties arising a result of changed or consistent enforcement of the regulations in the area of construction and the area of spatial and urban planning, should be reduced;
9. The components of the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy for Housing of the Republic of Macedonia (2007 – 2012), which concern the vulnerable groups, should be integrally implemented.

**Measures**

**Result1. The organization, quality and quantity of the public transport services for groups that are socially excluded with respect to transport should be improved;**

1. Provision of public transport or subsidized private transport in remote regions, especially for vulnerable groups;
2. Development of systems for privileged use of the public transport, including improving the benefits provided to handicapped persons in road traffic, arising from the current bylaws on the method for providing the disabled persons with easy access, movement, accommodation and work to buildings as well as within buildings;
3. Development of specialized public services for transporting people with special needs;
4. Instituting the lowest possible tariff in the public transport sector, which all socially vulnerable categories will be able to afford.

**Result 2. The access to transport system should be improved;**

1. Investments in surmounting physical barriers that disable people and older people have with respect to transport and using means of transport;
2. Reallocation of the providers of public goods and services to locations that can be reached and accessed without using any specialized transport.

Surmounting social exclusion in communications has increasingly been **seen as a significant human right** and it requires a reexamination of the method for measuring easy access to communication technologies.

Most measures and activities of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, that support aspects of social inclusion are defined in the National E-Inclusion Strategy which contains 7 priorities: 1) e-accessibility – provide equal opportunities for all citizens to access ICT, 2) Digital literacy – improve the ICT skills and capabilities of the citizens, 3) Aging – Facilitating an autonomous and independent life of the aging population, 4) Geographic inclusion – Using ICT to improve the social and economic situation in the less developed and difficult to reach areas of the country, 5) Inclusive e-Government – Good quality, reliable and easily accessible e-Government solutions for all citizens, 6) Social and cultural e-inclusion – promotion of the social and economic integration of the socially vulnerable groups, ethnic groups and marginalized groups with the aid of ICTand 7) Implementation of future recommendations of the EU, in accordance with the strategic guidelines from the EU Digital Agenda 2020.

Specific measures within these priorities have a greater direct significance for the ICT aspect of social inclusion than others. The following projects are especially significant: Computer Vouchers for Students, Development of a Speech Synthesizing Software, Procurement and Distribution of Assisting Devices that Facilitate the Access of Disabled Persons to the ICT, Implementation of Advanced IT Training for Unemployed People and WiFi in Rural Areas.

Therefore the new strategic **measures** for social inclusion in this area should shift towards:

**Result 3:The access to computer aided communications;**

1. Reorientation from a quantitative to a qualitative approach, including:

а. Consistent implementation of the Strategy and Actions Plan for the Development of Broadband Internet, especially in the rural and remote areas and underdeveloped areas, though placement of appropriate infrastructure,

b. Development, technical standardization and stimulation of the use of additional commercial (electronic trade etc.) and public (electronic government etc.) computer assisted services.

1. Implementation of the National Strategy for e-Inclusion (previously explained).

**Result 4: The quality with which the specific social categories use the potential of computer aided communications;**

1. Promote the quality of use by providing continuous, inexpensive or free trainings on how to utilize the potential of computer assisted communications, to the vulnerable groups. These trainings should include:

а. Horizontal and vertical integration of the trainings on how to use ICT within the public education system,

b. Development of education shows to be broadcasted on the public program services (MRTV, local radio and TV stations),

c. Specialized programs for adults/old people.

1. Development of good quality localized contents by stimulating production of contenton the languages of all ethnicities spoken in the country, within the public, private/business and civil sector, with special attention to:

a. Portals for people categorized as socially excluded, with content that includes news, documents, services, employment, questions/answers, discussion forums etc.

b. Development and affirmation of the domestic terminology – upgrading the glossary of Macedonian terms in the area of information technology.

1. Implementation of measures in accordance with the National Strategy for E-Inclusion.

In order to promote social inclusion in housing, the measures in this area have to include the following:

**Result 5: The level of substandard housing conditions should be reduced;**

1. Provision of appropriate connections to the utility and other infrastructure and subsidies to improve housing conditions;
2. Application of the rules enabling the regulation of the ownership of illegally constructed residential units.
3. Subsidized renting of privately owned apartments

**Result 6: The overcrowding of homes should be reduced;**

1. Provide support, within the social housing policies, for increasing the residential area per household member, especially for the Roma families and vulnerable groups.
2. Allocate funding for adaptation and reconstruction of apartments.
3. Construction of social housing apartments, which will be owned by the state and provided for rent at non-profitable tariffs.

**Result 7: The spatial segregation of ethnic and other types of communities should be suppressed;**

1. Precise definition and distribution of the actors, roles and responsibilities in the sector for social housing, and inclusion of the local public administration, the nongovernmental and the business sector;
2. Definition of the assumptions, mechanisms and institutions for capital investments in the social housing to the level of a developed social housing fund, which will include budgetary/fiscal mechanisms and agents, as well as socially motivated investors, including public-private partnerships;
3. Develop and define rights and responsibilities of the social housing regulatory body;
4. Identify and license service providers in social housing, including management and maintenance of the social housing fund, as well as specially defined services and minimum quality standards for social housing;

**Result 8: The risk of losing the resident status (tenant status);**

1. Define a credible and transparent procedure for acquiring and losing the rights related to social housing;
2. Develop mechanisms for subsidizing and helping people from vulnerable categories having housing problems;

**Result 9: The components of the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy for Housing of the Republic of Macedonia (2007 – 2012) should be integrally implemented.**

1. Implementation of the legal framework for legalization of the illegally built structures (a Law on the Procedure Regarding Illegally Built Structures has been enacted and it is broadly implemented) and providing assistance and support to the vulnerable groups;
2. Determination of a legal framework and enactment of a Law on Social Housing which will regulate the categories of social housing, supported living, subsidized housing, non-profitable housing etc.
3. Establishment of standards and norms for appropriate and minimal housing;
4. Initiation and establishment of a Fund for Building Apartments, including a program for building of apartments with resources from the Fund for Building Apartments;
5. Providing legislative incentives for housing savings. This should be done with the involvement of non-profit or low-profit housing organizations in the sphere of housing;
6. Establishment of systems and mechanisms for financing of housing, especially by creating stimulating fiscal facilities in the tax regulation;
7. Development of concepts and models for social housing of vulnerable groups, including subsidizing rents for socially vulnerable tenants, as well as enactment of a program for construction of apartments intended for social housing and housing of vulnerable groups.

**Area 6 Activation and strengthening of local governments**

Based on the information from the workshops held in December 2012 about the social protection services, it was assessed that there are serious deficiencies in the systemic and coordination actions in this area by the local stakeholders who should work to improve the situation of the most vulnerable groups of citizens.

At local level, the authorities have not developed sufficient strategies or specific action plans to improve the situation of the poorest and socially excluded citizens, except in eight municipalities Pehchevo, Berovo, Studenichani, Chashka, Lipkovo, Negotino, Radovish and Konche, where the preparation of strategies was initiated by a bilateral project financed by foreign donors and co-financed by the MLSP and the participating municipalities.

There is need to form a department (or a sector) for social protection in the municipalities, and to employ an expert officer that will work solely on the area of social protection. The scant activities in this area are currently implemented by a person employed in the department for public activities or the department for local economic development.

The municipalities and the centers for social work (CSW) have not established procedures and mechanisms for identification and support of the poor and the vulnerable categories of citizens. These categories of people are identified usually when the persons at risk approach the institutions, when they apply for material assistance or certain urgent situations (procurement of medicines, heating fuel etc.). The lack of professional staff and the large administrative workload for almost everyone working at the CSW, as well as the lack of vehicles are assessed as the main reasons for the insufficient mobilization of the professional CSW officers in the field. The lack of human resources in CSW is also the reason for not implementing the social prevention programs. Although the law has envisioned, still the schools have not employed social workers and the expert teams in the schools are not trained to do social work in education.

At local level, there is no established mechanism for consultation and participation of the vulnerable and poor groups of citizens. The larger municipalities have envisioned a budget item for awarding a one-time financial assistance to families at risk. However the decision to award the assistance is made by a commission that decides as it sees fit without any special criteria.

The municipalities have prepared social protection programs, but they are usually formalistic in nature, without any previous analysis of the situation and without proper budgetary allocations. The municipalities and the other local actors are not sufficiently involved in the implementation of these programs and the existing action plans.

The improvement of the situation of the vulnerable groups requires the municipalities, based on the Law on Local Self-Government, to recognize their roles in the social protection system and to mobilize all local resources (human, technical and financial) to reduce poverty and provide social inclusion of people in the local context.

In that context, **the activation and the strengthening of the local authorities has a twofold purpose, firstly to form the necessary infrastructure, and secondly to identify the areas where the municipality can directly implement parts of the National Strategy contained in section 4 of this Strategy**.

**Objective**

**Strengthen the role of local authorities in dealing with poverty and social vulnerability; create capacities and resources with a view of building social cohesion.**

**Results**

1. Form institutional facilities in the units of local self-government with a view of building capacities to deal with poverty and social exclusion;
2. Staff the local self-governments with educated employees that will deal with poverty and social exclusion;
3. Develop strategies for reducing poverty at local level;
4. Help the vulnerable groups to deal with the poverty and social exclusion;
5. Form modules for communication between the state and the local authorities;
6. Form a budgetary allocation for reduction of poverty and social exclusion.

**Measures**

**Result 1: Form institutional facilities in the units of local self-government with a view of building capacities to deal with poverty and social exclusion**

* 1. The units of local self-government (that do not have them) should form departments, and the larger municipalities should form sectors for social work with people at risk or need support as beneficiaries of social security.
  2. Establish procedures and mechanisms for identification and support of the poor and vulnerable categories of citizens in the municipalities.
  3. A local database of vulnerable categories needs to be created, in order to better design the local policies and capacities to deal with poverty.
  4. The municipalities should develop formal mechanisms for identification and consultationswith the vulnerable and socially excluded groups.
  5. Propose solutions and programs for employment of the poor and socially vulnerable categories at the level of municipalities through action plans and specific measures and activities

**Result 2. Staff the local self-governments with educated employees that will deal with poverty and social exclusion**

1. Employment of professional staff equipped with appropriate resources and equipment (vehicles) for field social work within the municipality;
2. Training the professional staff from the local self-government to implement programs for social prevention and recognize the needs of the vulnerable groups;
3. Employ social workers in schools and training the professional teams in the schools to provide social work in education.
4. For the purposes of finding human resources to quickly staff the units of the local self-government that work with the vulnerable groups, the municipalities can engage volunteers, professional officers working on short term contracts, part time officers, shared work tasks and other flexible work practices, or they can use the existing staff from the relevant institutions on a rotational basis (on a weekly or a monthly basis), on call basis, or engage experts on certain days of the week.
5. Open free legal counseling offices in the units of local self-government that will provide support and legal aid in cases of unequal treatment between men and women in cooperation with the local level gender mechanisms, the centers for social work and the NGO sector.

**Result 3. Develop strategies for reducing poverty at local level**

1. The units of local self-government should enact local strategic documents and action plans with appropriate budget allocations, that will help provide a long term solution to the problems of poverty and social exclusion. These documents should be based on integral, multi-sector and coordinated planning.
2. Develop a detailed plan for monitoring the implementation of the strategic documents for reducing the poverty and providing social inclusion at the municipal level.
3. The municipalities should develop strategic guidelines for cooperation and support of the local NGO sector, working in this field, especially having in mind the potential of the NGO sector to implement and attract useful projects. The local level NGO sector can be an extended hand of the ULSG and/or CSW and a good quality service provider. This requires strengthening of the nongovernmental organizations that provide social services. The municipalities or the CSW would pay the nongovernmental organizations for the services provided, in accordance with the previously established criteria.
4. In addition to offering training and retraining, the municipalities need to systemically work on the psycho-social strengthening of the vulnerable categories, depending on the risk which they have, which would simplify the process of their employment.
5. The municipalities should organize public works of public interest for seasonal and temporary works, in addition to the active employment measures of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in various fields (for example in the utility field: cleaning of green areas and riverbeds, waste removal etc.), that will last for a period of six months during which the social financial assistance is suspended (or continuously paid) and then it continues. These categories of citizens can be involved in the support of other vulnerable categories, i.e. SFA beneficiaries can be engaged in providing social services (for example: assistance to old people at home, etc.).
6. The municipalities should introduce specific services for social protection and inclusion of the people from rural areas and other vulnerable groups at the level of the municipality (for example:opening of soup kitchens and, in larger rural communities, provide transportation to healthcare institutions several times per week etc.). Building of preschool institutions in rural areas is yet another important measure to increase the level of inclusion since the earliest childhood.
7. Provision of physical accessibility to the institutions for people with physical disabilities. This is an area that needs to be improved on national as well as on local level.

**Result 4 Help the vulnerable groups to deal with the poverty and social exclusion**

1. Create a more flexible legislation for determining the criteria for receiving SFA, because there are categories of citizens that do not fully comply with the requirements, but still urgently need SFA. In addition, the level of the financial assistance should be calculated on an individual basis – in accordance with the needs of the applicants.
2. In order to make the services provided by the CSW as much accessible, as possible to the citizens in rural areas, mobile teams for social work will have to be established. These teams will work out of a mobile office in a van and will visit, at specific prearranged times, the rural and urban areas where there are no CSW offices.
3. In order to identify and help the most vulnerable groups of citizens (especially those that live in areas which are difficult to reach), it is necessary to intensify the implementation of social prevention by introducing special organizational units within the CSW.
4. It is necessary to strengthen the capacities of the CSW officers, to identify vulnerable groups, in order to properly design the needs and target the social services.
5. Training of the employment center staff to help the vulnerable groups train or retrain or otherwise adapt to the needs of the labor market.
6. Day centers and counseling facilities should be opened at the level of the entire Republic of Macedonia. These facilities will be available for several categories of citizens, especially the vulnerable groups.
7. There is a need for systemic, coordinated and long term cooperation between the centers for social work, the municipalities, the employment centers, the nongovernmental organizations, the schools, police stations and other organizations, with a view of resolving the social issues.
8. Create affirmative, encouraging and positive measures conducive to reducing the risk of social exclusion of women and reducing the poverty rate of women, with a special emphasis on women from rural areas and the ethnic communities. Improve the reproductive health of men and women.

**Result 5: Form modules for better coordination of the state with the local authorities regarding the implementation of the Strategy**

1. Employ social protection coordinators for cooperation with the line ministries and the centers for social work, in the local level organizational units (departments or sectors). These coordinators would be involved in the creation of policies on national level, especially those related to the living standard of the population and social inclusion.
2. Involve the Association of the Units of Local Self-Government and the Ministry of Local Self-Government in the development of the policies related to social issues at the municipal level.
3. Form local coordinating bodies for social issues, comprising relevant local stakeholders (ULS, EC, CSW, NGO and other organizations or institutions as needed). The municipality will appoint a person responsible to organize the meetings and monitor the implementation of the measures.
4. Form an inter-sector body responsible for attracting domestic and foreign investments funds for the purpose of resolving the social problems at local level. This body would also contain representatives from the planned statistical regions.
5. Also, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the municipalities, should track the enforcement of the regulations related to resolving the requirements of the poor, and especially the Law on Local Self-Government, article 22 (which stipulates the responsibilities of the municipalities in the social sphere) and, if needed, propose changes or additions to the legislation.

**Result 6. Form a budgetary allocation for reduction of poverty and social exclusion**

1. The municipal budget process should provide for funds for implementation of the strategies and the decisions enacted by the municipalities to reduce poverty and social exclusion.
2. Develop ways of cooperation with the private sector to resolve local social problems, by developing corporate social responsibility stimulation models.
3. Organize donor events with the local business community; seriously focus on the implementation of the existing models for supporting the employers when they employ people from specific vulnerable groups, as well as a more rigorous monitoring of these funds, in order to prevent possible misuse of the funds by citizens or companies.
4. Stimulate the development and implementation of projects on social issues at local level, social protection, social inclusion and poverty reduction, through direct budget financing or co-financing by the municipalities and the national authorities, which increases the ownership of the social sphere projects.
5. Support initiatives for business association, business incubators at local level and quickly providing information to the citizens on starting a business within the municipality.
6. Encouraging self-employment in addition to the active policies implemented by the state and the local authorities, provide contributions by facilitating business start-ups by forming locations and infrastructure mitigations for the businesses.
7. Introduce the concept of gender sensitive budgeting in the budgetary policies of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the units of local self-government.
8. Appropriate allocation of the financial and human resources to the national and local level gender equality mechanisms, in order to ensure more effective functioning and compliance with the legally mandated roles and obligations.
9. Conduct surveys to measure how well the citizens are informed about the protection of their rights and the mechanisms that exist in the Republic of Macedonia, both on local and national level.

Local level institutions should come closer to the vulnerable groups of citizens and to perceive them as their clients which need help. Therefore the level of information of the citizens about the regulations that can help them get out of situations which pose risks, has to be increased. In that context, it is necessary to raise awareness and educate the employees in the local level institutions about the needs of these categories of citizens and how to accommodate and resolve them.

Improve the situation of women and reduce the level of poverty and the risk of social exclusion with a greater focus on the activities aimed at incorporating the gender concept in the policies on central and local level from a social inclusion point of view, through the gender institutional mechanisms in cooperation with the nongovernmental sector.

Enact a Gender Equality Strategy whereby the Government will show a firmer political will and readiness to comprehensively and in a coordinated way, work on improving the position of women in all spheres of social life, especially considering the special challenges facing women of different ethnicities, especially in the local context.

**Area 7. Support of the vulnerable groups**

According to the considerations that have been made, in addition to the comprehensive approach of the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010 to 2020, the revised National Strategy should also consider the different specific characteristics of the different vulnerable groups. This will help express the specific needs of the different vulnerable groups and the type of support they require, as well as with the harmonization with the EU 2020 Strategy which will, in turn, bring the measures closer to the beneficiaries, i.e. the socially excluded persons.

Although the previous sections of the strategy start by looking at the area where social exclusion and poverty have been identified, this section starts by looking and the vulnerable groups and their specific needs and requirements for change.

This helps cross reference the phenomena, and although, at first there seem to be some repetitions, this in fact provides a comprehensive representation of the necessary measures, policies and resources needed to resolve poverty and social exclusion.

During the preparation of the National Strategy it was identified that the Roma and their everyday problems have been indicated as a priority that requires the creation and implementation of specific local and national policies. In addition, another particularly vulnerable category includes the disabled people. The nongovernmental sector in this country is especially active in improving their situation. In addition there are initiatives that receive support from foreign funds as well an institutional support from the state or the municipalities. Also, the other vulnerable categories of citizens have been analyzed and specific measures and activities have been proposed to improve their situation.

The vulnerable categories of citizens considered in this strategy and especially analyzed in this section are: Roma, minorities, unemployed people, disabled people, old and decrepit people, children at risk, women, users of drugs and psychotropic substances, homeless persons, young persons, single parents, chronically ill people and people with malignant conditions and victims of human trafficking and prostitution.

**Objective**

To develop mechanisms for reducing poverty and social exclusion of the vulnerable categories of citizens.

**Results**

* 1. Improve the situation of the Roma;
  2. Improve the situation of the minorities;
  3. Improve the situation of the unemployed persons from the vulnerable groups;
  4. Resolve the rights and requirements of the disabled and handicapped people;
  5. Support old and decrepit people;
  6. Work with children and assisting children at risk;
  7. Greater employment of women – victims of family violence;
  8. Assistance and treatment of persons that abuse drugs and psychotropic substances:
  9. Fostering homeless persons;
  10. Support young people from vulnerable categories to find employment;
  11. Provide support and assistance of single parents;
  12. Special care for the chronically ill people and people with malignant conditions;
  13. Provide assistance and care to people who have been victims of human trafficking and prostitution.

Based on the considerations made for the purposes of this Strategy, as well as on previously mentioned strategic documents and acts it has been suggested that the Roma are one of the most vulnerable groups on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. In spite of the large number of strategic documents and action plans for improving their situation in different areas, still there is a series of measures that can and should be implemented in the short and the medium term.

**Measures**

**Result 1: Improve the situation of the Roma**

1. Provide support in dealing with the problems of housing, as well as infrastructure in the Roma neighborhoods such as: lack of electricity, sewerage and street systems and the general problem with insufficient housing space for the Roma.
2. Provide support to the interested Roma with respect to preparing the housing documentation.
3. Build models for regular provision of information to this vulnerable group, with respect to overcoming poverty and social exclusion.
4. For the purposes of improving the housing situation, the Roma, as a vulnerable category of people should receive a subsidy for a part of the monthly rate for social housing.
5. Employ as many Roma as possible in the public institutions. Thus they would have greater confidence and would feel “welcome” in the institutions.
6. The municipalities where a lot of Roma live should employ an officer that would work solely on issues related to the improvement of the situation for this vulnerable category.
7. Consider the possibility to include more Roma in the soup kitchens.
8. Provide opportunities for disable Roma to be included in the day centers.
9. Positive trends have been noted with respect to the education of Roma these past few years. The education level of a large number of citizens has increased, thanks to the national commitments and interventions (provision of personal documentation, conditional cash transfers, free textbooks etc.). However, there are still problems with the inclusion of Roma in preschool education. The Roma education fund, the units of local self-government and the MLSP should expand the number of Roma in kindergartens throughout the country, and they should work more comprehensively with the parents of these children, in order to raise the level of awareness about the need for education as a basis for exiting the poverty cycle.
10. Provide additional help in the education Roma so that they can achieve better result in the school process. Provide a free extended day care for the children in the schools, and provide free meal/snack during the school day. The additional support in the education process can be offered also by the nongovernmental sector.
11. Open day centers for fostering, socialization and educational support of Roma children whose parents are busy with everyday obligations.
12. Implement regular humanitarian activities for Roma families with many children. These activities will entail collection of food, clothes, shoes, school supplies etc.
13. With respect to healthcare, it is necessary to increase the coverage of the Roma population with healthcare, and especially for the chronically ill, as well as to open healthcare points and health counseling facilities in the Roma communities.
14. The measure of “Roma health mediators” should be institutionalized.
15. Roma need to be trained in deficient occupations and should receive full support during the implementation of such trainings (paid travel costs and food). Whenever possible, these trainings should be implemented in the locations where the Roma live.
16. Apply the positive practice from the existence of the multi-ethnic center (example from Prilep) which offers information and services regarding the inclusion of certain ethnicities (primarily Roma) in society.

**Result 2. Improve the situation of the different minorities**

1. Another characteristic vulnerable group, in addition to the Roma, is the Yoruk population which lives in the mountainous villages in the eastern and southwestern region. The reason for social exclusion of these people is the low level of education and the fact that they cannot speak the Macedonian language, especially the Yoruk women and therefore specific education programs need to be implemented for this category of people.
2. Underage marriages, families with many children and the fact that the Yuroks live far from the larger towns are an additional problem that contributes to the transfer of poverty between generations and the exclusion of this category of people. This requires measures specific to this vulnerable group and especially providing information about the social protection opportunities.
3. With respect to the unemployed women of Albanian, Turkish, Yoruk and other ethnicities, it is necessary to work on raising the awareness of these people, especially in rural environments overwhelmed by traditional standpoints regarding the work of women outside the house.
4. It is necessary to work on the economic strengthening of the women coming from the minority groups, by teaching them handcrafts and how to make traditional objects which they could them sell on the market.
5. The increase of employment of members of the minority ethnic communities requires subsidizing the employment of these people in such a way that will make them competitive on the labor market, especially people with lower level of education

**Result 3. Improve the situation of the unemployed persons from the vulnerable groups**

1. To overcome the unemployment problem is a key priority to reducing poverty and social exclusion. In addition to the measures mentioned previously in this Strategy, proper conditions should be created for individuals from vulnerable groups to be treated with dignity when they find employment and the monthly wages they earn should be sufficient to exit poverty.
2. Interconnecting and synchronizing education and employment of vulnerable categories, especially adults and people who are completely excluded from the social system, through targeting in order to provide qualifications and access for these people to opportunities to develop their skills. In addition support should be provided also for people whose employment is contingent to providing incentives to employers.
3. The Law on Social Protection needs to change with respect to the duration of the SFA benefit, because the duration of the benefit is a reason why beneficiaries capable of working do not actively seek work.
4. When providing SFA, there should be a binding clause that will obligate the beneficiaries capable of working to attend offered training courses and accept offered job positions.
5. Increase the number of people from vulnerable categories using soup kitchen in order to cover as many people at risk as possible.
6. The training centers should provide training and retraining, as well as opportunities to attend these trainings in the place where the participants live or, if that is not possible, then the centers should cover the travel costs of the participants.
7. It is necessary to work on strategic attraction of domestic and foreign investors and open real job positions in local areas.
8. People with unregulated status or without proper personal documentations need to be informed and supported in effectuating their right to citizenship and procuring the necessary personal documentation.

**Result 4: Resolve the rights and requirements of the disabled and handicapped people**

1. Undertake measures to monitor the enforcement of the Law on Employment, especially its provisions about the protection of disabled persons against various types of abuses by employers and companies.
2. The state and the municipalities should make efforts to build resources (technical, financial and human) for providing assistance in home environments.If a family does have the means then they can receive the assistance in the institutions. The amount of material assistance to disabled persons should increase, and support should be provided to the handicapped persons, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Handicapped Persons.
3. Form a statistical database of disabled and handicapped persons, i.e. a single registry with data on all disabled people on municipal level (which is a necessity for the social as well as educational process), as well as a registry of employed disabled persons (a municipal social map).
4. Form mobile multidisciplinary teams (at the level of schools and homes) that will help people with disabilities.
5. Build mechanisms for early detection and developmental counseling facilities on local level for persons with disabilities and create a lot of forms of support for these people.
6. Providing support to the biological family of persons with disabilities, especially with respect to the education process, work training and employment, support for independent living, as well as an appropriate healthcare.
7. The units of local self-government should form and/or implement social protection programs.
8. Coordinated inter-sector cooperation between the institutions and organizations with a view of appropriately including these people with the healthcare and education sector.
9. These people need support and assistance to procure appropriate documentation in the PDIFM after the death of their parents. This support should be provided by the legal services of CSW, especially having in mind the short deadlines for effectuating the right to a family pension.
10. Verify and categorize all children with disabilities in the education process, in order to prevent registering healthy children as disabled children (in order to take advantage of certain benefits offered to these categories) in the special schools.
11. The teachers need to receive special training for working with disabled children. In addition, teaching assistants should be introduced. The implementation of education inclusion is a national commitment.
12. Examine the opportunities for the schools that include children with disabilities in the education process, to be entitled to certain benefits in accordance with the law and inform the schools of such opportunities.
13. Subdivide the disabled children in the day centers according to their age. This would allow for an appropriate individualized approach.
14. Continue the financial support provided by the municipalities to the day centers, especially those started with foreign support and which have demonstrated exceptional performance.
15. Building of conditions for including a large number of disabled persons in the day centers in the municipalities, as well as opening of centers where such people can stay for short period of time. It is especially important to mobilize the persons with disabilities from the village areas and bring them to the towns where they can have access to the day centers.
16. It is necessary to introduce services for providing homecare, especially to people with most severe developmental impediments and people requiring continuous care.
17. There is a need to open a resource/information/education center for disabled people on municipal or regional level.
18. Consider the possibilities to change the legislation, i.e. enact a new law that will envision offering employment to disabled people in the public sector by introducing quotas for employment of disabled people in the public institutions.
19. Introduce programs for work training of these people and establish the concept of social entrepreneurship.
20. Healthcare should be without age restrictions (disabled people older than 26 should be exempt from co-payments), and the health staff should be properly trained on the rights of these people, while the handicapped persons should be eligible for free tertiary healthcare.
21. In consideration of the situation of disabled people incapable of working and older than 26 years of age, consider the possibility to award this category of people a minimal income, having in mind that their costs increase proportionally to their age.
22. Open several housing centers with support. In addition to the opportunities for this category of people to socialize, learn life skills and build self-confidence, the opening of these centers will mean employment for a lot of people from the local community with appropriate qualifications.
23. Improve the information accessibility and offer training on working with computers to people with disabilities.
24. The legislation needs to change immediately with a view to equalize the rights and benefits of the biological and fostering families (especially the monetary benefits).
25. Multiple campaigns are needed, organized by EARM, to raise the public awareness about the problems, but also the potential of this category of people (especially the awareness of potential employers), as well as campaigns to inform the disabled people and their families about the rights and opportunities on the labor market. These activities should be implemented in a clear and understandable way and should cover as many of the stakeholders as possible.
26. It is necessary to envision larger amounts of funding in the national and local budgets for development and a network of social services in the different municipalities, targeted to this category of people, as well as adapt the space to the needs of the handicapped people.

Alienation from the family, physical fatigue, illness, neglect by the closest relatives and friends, economic dependence, difficult access to the institutions, especially healthcare institutions, CSW, PDIFM and others, are the fundamental problems facing the old and decrepit people. The old people need retirement homes, mobile services that will visit and detect the needs of the old and decrepit people, healthcare, procurement of medicines and food, etc.

**Result 5. Support old and decrepit people**

1. Form a database of old people (categorize these people by their mobility, age structure, whether they have income or not etc.) at a municipal level, which would be related with an appropriate central registry.
2. There is a need to provide healthcare over the weekend and holidays, especially in rural areas where there is no developed network of healthcare institutions.
3. Introduce subsidies for cultural involvement (attending the theatre etc.).
4. It is necessary to provide hot meals for old and decrepit people in rural areas. Consideration should be given to subsidizing the meals of old people with low incomes.
5. Introduce food delivery services to the homes of the beneficiaries. In addition to soup kitchens, this is another service which is necessary for the immovable old people.
6. Old people capable of working could get involved in companies on a voluntary or any other basis wherever there is a need to take advantage of their expertize, especially to train the younger staff.
7. Provide support and care in a home environment at the local level. Involve the nongovernmental sector in the provision of services to old people, if they fulfill certain conditions. The funds for this could be provided by the national or local authorities, with some financial participation from the beneficiaries themselves. Consideration should be given to training and engagement of SFA beneficiaries for the purposes of providing support to this category of citizens, in a home environment.
8. It is necessary to form clubs of old people within the existing retirement homes or societies. The aspiration would be to have old women visit such clubs as well and not only men, which is the current trend.
9. The municipalities should make efforts to introduce more forms of protection and services for older people (home environment services: adaptation of the home, maintenance of the home, installation of 24/7 alarm systems, temporary substitution of the family care etc., as well as establishment of day centers, clubs, small group homes, accommodation in fostering families, palliative services, patronage services, care for disabled women etc.).
10. It is necessary to increase the number of retirement homes (or expand the existing ones) and introduce the concept of sheltered housing for old people, because the four public homes do not satisfy the needs in the country. The existing homes accommodate people from other municipalities and not only from the municipalities where the retirement homes are located. However it is still difficult to find an available vacancy. Consideration should be given to the opportunities to get involved in public – private partnerships with domestic and foreign firms.
11. The municipalities should not charge communal fess to the investors that build social assistance buildings or retirement homes (Look at the example with the construction of a retirement home in Shtip with self-contributions, i.e. the old people themselves provided contributions to cover part of the cost, and the rest was covered by humanitarian events organized for this purpose by the Municipality).
12. It is necessary to identify potential fostering/sheltering families, as a form of protection of old people.
13. For the old people at risk of poverty, it is necessary to organize humanitarian events for collecting food, clothes, hygiene supplies, firewood etc.
14. Having in mind that most of the old people have difficulties with respect to resolving legal and ownership issues, especially in relation to the members of their immediate families, it is necessary to establish a legal service that will represent the old people, through the CSW, old people’s clubs or other forms that exist within the municipality.

Some of the more characteristic categories of children at risk are the children from poor families, street children, children of dysfunctional families and juvenile offenders. For these categories of children the education process does not provide mentoring programs, there are no municipal professional workers, not any psychological or social support is provided by the schools and the centers for treatment of narcotic addictsin the municipalities. For street children and action plan for supporting these categories during the period 2013-2015 is being prepared. This plan envisions having a child file and working with these children on an individual basis, working with their parents etc.One of the fundamental problems with the inclusion of street children in the social flows is the fact that they do not have personal identification documents and slowness of the procedure for acquiring them.Therefore these children do not have, or have limited access to education, social and health services.

**Result 6. Work with children and assisting children at risk**

1. Form a patrol service for identification and support of street children, considering that most regions do not have any institution that deals with this. This has been introduced in Skopje and yields solid results.
2. Determine the responsibilities of the social work centers with respect to the children found on the street, which come from other municipalities and are involved in begging during market days or on a seasonal basis when the region faces a larger inflow of persons that work abroad (except feeding them, the responsible institutions do not have the authority to instigate further procedures for these kids).
3. The municipalities should open day centers for street children or provide financial support to the existing centers.
4. Provide dormitory accommodation and mandatory school attendance during the working week. In order to avoid full separation from the families, the children have the right to visits during the weekend.
5. In order to improve the early child development, it is necessary to work methodologically with the children at risk, but also with their parents.
6. Examine child poverty and form criteria and indicators to monitor child poverty and undertake measures that will have a direct impact on the overcoming of the adverse situations and prevent the appearance of poverty among children at risk.
7. The students with bad behavior need to be included in the social flows for supporting certain vulnerable categories, on a voluntary basis (for example: visit old people and provide basic supplies). At the same time, one must have in mind the educational, emphatic and inclusive moment of this accompanying measure so that the participants do not take it as a punishment, but rather make them feel useful and accepted by society.
8. Engage the municipalities and the centers for social work in the area of peer violence, introduce education programs for children at a later development stage and which have missed the appropriate level of education related too cooperation and living together.
9. Implement campaigns for prevention of juvenile delinquency and provide information about the ensuing consequences. In regions where this phenomenon is more frequent, open a day center for children and young people, with therapy programs and creative utilization of the potential, mentorships, sports, and recreational activities.
10. Employ social workers in primary schools, in order to facilitate close cooperation between the municipalities and the local schools in respect to including students in works of general benefit, and stimulate philanthropic activities on local level.

The lack of appropriate capacities and support programs provided by municipalities, and the lack of interest of employers to employ women who are victims of family violence are part of the problemsfacing these people. The inappropriate records, the judgments from the environment, the fear from a bully, the economic dependence and the poor socialization are additional reasons for social exclusion of women who are victims of family violence. The improvement of their situation requires the support from the basic family, provision of free legal aid, strengthening and encouragement to get included in the labor market.

**Result 7. Greater employment of women – victims of family violence**

1. Establish an appropriate and unified records of women who are victims of family violence, within the relevant institutions (centers for social work, police stations, etc.).
2. The existing shelters for the victims (the so called shelter centers) should be strengthened with expert staff like psychologists and social workers, which would work on the psychological and social strengthening of the victims.
3. Increasingly inform the public about the initial signs indicating family violence, and stimulate the reporting of family violence. This requires training of the educational staff in kindergartens to recognize family violence through the behavior of the children.
4. Create specific measures for reporting psychological violence, especially in intellectual circles.
5. Detect family violence through the nongovernmental sector, especially using the existing SOS telephone lines operated by professional staff trained to work with victims of family violence, which as a good practice should be expanded in multiple regions through Macedonia.
6. Stimulate the victims of family violence to form associations for the purpose of a more organized fight for their rights or to fight for their rights through informal groups for self-help.
7. Open family counseling facilities for prevention of this phenomenon.
8. The municipalities should provide financial benefits or subsidies to companies that employ these categories of persons, and they should lobby with the employers for the employment of such persons.
9. It is necessary to offer specific training, requalification and training of these people, in accordance with the analyses of the needs of the labor market.
10. Help single mothers, victims of family violence, women suffering from malignant conditions, unemployed women, divorced women, and Romani women.
11. Increase the level of material benefits in order to meet the basic needs of the people at social risk.
12. Introduce active measures for priority employment of the long term unemployed female beneficiaries of social protection.
13. Exempt the female beneficiaries of social protection from payment of administrative fees.
14. Enrich the network of social institutions by promoting public – private partnership.

**Result 8. Assistance and treatment of persons that abuse drugs and psychotropic substances**

1. Prevention of this phenomenon, as well as introduction of services for institutional and other protection, by implementing preventive campaigns for education of the young people about the consequences of this phenomenon.
2. Introduction of records and opening of municipal centers for treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts.
3. Raise the awareness for accepting these categories of people in the environment where the live.
4. Facilitate methadone therapy in several towns in this country.
5. With respect to employment, the period of employer subsidies should be longer and the trainings implemented by the employment center for these people, should be more intensive and shorter.
6. There should offers to study manual handcrafts which would also serve as a work therapy for these people.
7. Use the experiences, for example from Strumica, where the drugs addicts have been involved in providing agricultural services.

**Result 9. Fostering homeless persons**

1. Prepare a detailed census of the homeless population living on the territory of this country.
2. It is necessary to conduct detailed field work to survey the homeless and identify their needs and potentials.
3. There is a need for field work and personal contacts with the homeless persons in order to establish trust.
4. Construction of new welfare apartments for the homeless people or repairmen, reconstruction and adaptation of the existing dwellings, having in mind the emotional relationship of these people to the territory where they live.
5. Open hostels and day centers for fostering homeless people, i.e. overnight facilities which would be open, especially during bad weather conditions.
6. It is necessary to inform the homeless people about their rights and opportunities. This could be implemented either by the CSW staff or by NGOs active in this sphere on local level.
7. It is necessary to open a larger number of hostels/day centers for sheltering these people, in municipalities where a lot of homeless people have been detected. The practice to shelter these people in retirement homes (for example in Bitola) has been assessed as bad by some participants, because these people have not been subjected to proper medical tests and could be a threat of infection to the old people that are staying in the retirement homes.

The young unemployed persons, as an especially vulnerable category are not satisfied with the amount of effectuated material rights, because they feel useless they do not instigate any new initiatives and they do not have the spirit of volunteering, often they do not accept the jobs offered by the employment center, they have problems with their self-confidence, they are not sufficiently sensitive to the vulnerable categories etc. The level of inclusion of the young people can be achieved through employment, effectuation of material rights and professional development.

**Result 10. Support young people from vulnerable categories to find employment**

1. Encourage the young people to get involved in associations and organizations for development of new businesses or carriers, through which they would get information about opportunities and their rights on the labor market, would learn about the ways to actively seek work and start-up their own businesses, and would work on preparing the documentation necessary for job applications. A good example in this direction was presented by the Employment Center in Tetovo, where with the support from a foreign donation, the Center established job clubs which offer support for certain categories of unemployed persons in the process of job applications (preparation of personal resumes, motivation letters), as well as training on certain skills, manuals for legal stay and work abroad.
2. The employers need to be stimulated and the measures for subsidizing companies when they employ young people, by first taking them as interns and then employing them for a longer period of time if they prove successful, should continue.
3. It is necessary to provide timely transfer of the volunteering fee to the young people involved in the different companies as volunteers, having in mind that these funds are intended for covering the costs for food and transport to and from the working position.
4. It is necessary to undertake measures to raise awareness among the unqualified young people about the need for training, learning of languages and computer skills, acquisition of communication skills and a rational use of the free time. In this context, it is necessary to provide more information about the opportunities to complete the education, especially for persons from the vulnerable categories.
5. The young people living in rural areas or agricultural regions require the creation of measures that would encourage the young people to work on taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the IPARD funds.

The single parents are a special vulnerable category which has the priority when creating the measures in the employment centers and when hiring people for seasonal work of public interest. The single parents with low levels of education are more vulnerable than those with higher education and those that are well provided for.

The problems facing this vulnerable category, especially single mothers living in remote villages are: insufficient information about their rights, neglected education, communications problems, environmental impacts, difficult access to institutions, as well as the tradition and religious beliefs with respect to the how independent should women be in leading their lives.

**Result 11. Provide support and assistance of single parents**

1. Stimulate labor inclusion.The ULSG and the EC should cooperate and engage single parents in public activities for periods of up to six months. It is necessary to extend the period of engagement of these categories of people in public activities (not only utility activities, but also social sphere activities), which would mitigate any future dependence on social financial assistance.
2. Include single parents in opportunities for training and retraining, training for language, communication and information skills.
3. Another necessary measure is the introduction of support for children that live with single parents until they finish their elementary education, as well as introduction of extended day care for preschool children living in families where the parent works.
4. Another sub-category are the Albanian women who are single mothers, especially in more traditional municipalities or regions, where due to the harsh patriarchal beliefs the women are not allowed to participate in the labor market. It is necessary to work on raising the awareness and uproot some traditions, increase the social transfers to this category of women and their minor children. It is necessary to work on the economic strengthening of the Albanian women through handcrafts and manufacturing of traditional product that could be sold on the market.
5. For better socialization of these categories it is necessary to form self-help groups.
6. The single parents in the eastern part, in accordance with research, are categorized as single mothers employed in the technical industry and they require specific assistance measures.

The Ministries and the Health Insurance Fund do not provide sufficient funding to provide services to the chronically ill persons and persons with malignant conditions. These people are insufficiently informed about their rights. There are insufficient statistical data about these people. This category of people lacks education about their rights and which institutions can they turn to for the effectuation of their rights. These are just some of the problems facing this vulnerable category of people. Therefore measures and activities have been considered to provide special care for these people.

**Result 12. Special care for the chronically ill people and people with malignant conditions**

1. These people need to be registered as a separate category when the EARM creates the active employment measures. In addition, the local self-government should prepare annual plans with measures that will incorporate these people as a special employment category.
2. It is necessary to revise the obligation for annual registration of the chronically ill people in the institutions, especially with respect to paralyzed persons whose situation cannot possibly improve substantively.
3. Provision of a financial fund within the local self-government, for providing support to this category to procure medicines or treatment.
4. Opening of a regional oncology centers in certain regions, as well as provide exemptions from the payment of the health co-payment for women suffering from malignant conditions.
5. It is necessary to stimulate these people to form formal or informal associations through which they can receive information about the rights, opportunities (for example: part time work, quota employment etc.), and which could also serve as support groups.

The fostering of people who are victims of human trafficking and person involved in prostitution, is seen as a separate category of people which require measures for social inclusion. This category of people, primarily women at risk, is mostly represented in the Polog and the southwestern region of Macedonia. Nationally, there are no institutionalized services from the public sector, while in some regions (Gostivar) there are nongovernmental organizations that provide support to this vulnerable category.

The priority areas for improvement of the situation of this vulnerable group are the social prevention, rehabilitation, resocialization, and establishment of crises centers and SOS lines.

**Result 13. Provide assistance and care to people who have been victims of human trafficking and prostitution**

1. Nationally, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth examination of the trafficking and prostitution phenomenon and determine the characteristics, the needs and the problems of this vulnerable group.
2. Raise the awareness about the consequences from prostitution, through campaigns and organization of education for prevention in school on local level.
3. Open a rehabilitation center and introduce programs for reintegration of this vulnerable group on regional level.
4. Form a crisis center for short term accommodation as a form of protections, which would offer quick interventions of rescue and protection.
5. Introduce an SOS line for this category, which could be managed by nongovernmental organizations.
6. Review the requirements for protection against sexually transmitted diseases and educate the people that would be discovered as users of services of sexual workers, as well as permanent regulation and control of these phenomena.
7. Raising awareness about gender aspects of judges, public prosecutors, representatives of the ombudsman, attorneys and young lawyers with respect to the legislation from the area of gender equality and anti-discrimination.

**Section4Implementation of the strategy**

**1. Application of the concept and the role of the Government**

The application of the concepts proposed in the National Strategy has implications on the level of involvement of the institutions, but also on the expected effects. Due to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the problems, which was indicated before, the highest governing authority, **the Government should be the leading agent and coordinator of the implementation of this Strategy**. Certainly **theministries** should lead the different strategic initiatives and measures, in accordance with their responsibilities.

In this framework, the formation and the direct implementation of the measures could be simplified with the formation of **a sector or a department for social inclusion in the cabinet of the president of the Government**. This department will coordinate the activities on a daily or a periodic basis and will inform the highest governing authority about the growth of employment and the reduction of poverty, and, as needed, will propose appropriate solutions for which the government will have to make the appropriate decisions[[5]](#footnote-6).

Every measure that is implemented or planned to change or enact on the level of Government, ministry of any other authority, must be examined from various viewpoints. This review and analysis reveals **the impact of that measure on the social exclusion, employment, unemployment, as well as poverty. Such an assessment is a requirement when proposing any measures. This assessment** will impact the enactment and implementation of the entire National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion, as well as the developmental effects in general.

**2. Discussion in the Government before the agenda**

There will a standing item on every Government session, i.e. a discussion before the start of the agenda (like the discussion about the European integrations) where the participants will assess the measures and the effects that impact the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, the growth of employment, as well as all other initiatives from the National Strategy.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the other line ministries and institutions involved in the National Coordination Mechanism will have the obligation to report what they have done with respect to the National Strategy and the annual operational plans for implementation of the Strategy. This would make **the policies, need and resources cut across all the line ministries** with a view of reducing poverty and social exclusion as a continuous and a long term process.

This will help establish a mechanism which will not only influence the reduction of the adverse phenomena, but will also **prevent any further manifestation of unemployment**, poverty and social exclusion, i.e. it will have a preemptive role.

In addition, **the annual report for implementation of the National Strategy and the operational plans** will be subject to review.

**3. Responsibilities**

According to the specified measures, activities and recommendations in the envisioned area, **the following ministries and authorities, or institutions shall be responsible for implementing the measures and activities** proposed in the Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion:

* Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
* Ministry of Health
* Ministry of Education and Science
* Ministry of Economy
* Ministry of Transport and Communications
* Ministry of Finance
* Ministry of Local Self-Government
* Ministry of Information Society and Administration
* Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy|
* Ministry of Justice – Registrar’s Office
* Secretariat for Implementation of the Framework Agreement
* Secretariat for European Affairs
* Agency for Young People and Sport
* State Statistical Office
* Employment Agency
* Agency for Entrepreneurship Support
* Units of Local Self-Government.

For the purpose of the above ministries, authorities and organizations it is necessary to prepare an **Operational Plan of Measures and Activities for Implementation of the National Strategy**, in order to precisely define which entity will implement which tasks, obligation or activity, as well as the deadlines (short term, medium term and long term).

In addition, **the work programs of these ministries and institutions will contain specific measures and activities from the National Strategy** under their jurisdiction. This will establish a cross coordination and synchronization of these tasks, as well as an obligation to report about the progress of implementation when submitting the report in the progress of the work programs of the ministries.

**4. National coordinating mechanism**

**The national coordination mechanism for reducing poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia** formed with a decision from the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, with specified responsibilities and term of office, needs to be activated in order to provide administrative, financial and technical support to the implementation of the National Strategy. In that context, the building of its human resource capacities (in addition to the line ministries, include several experts) and involvement in the achievement of the goals of the National Strategy is the main driver that should impact the dynamic of the changes and the accomplishment of the social inclusion processes. The findings that were discovered during the data collection stage of the implementation of the National Strategy suggest that the National Mechanism should have more frequent activities and it should refer to the highest governing levels in order to provide coordination of the policies and measures envisioned in this strategy.

The strengthening of this mechanism and increasing of its operability would achieve inter-sector coordination and would provide input for the participants in this process. The usual methods of coordination of the people envisioned in the National Coordinating Mechanisms include joint meetings, meetings in smaller groups, round tables and workshops. Additional education and transfer of knowledge from better developed foreign regions will have a positive influence on the work of this coordinating mechanism.

The national coordination mechanism should enact a time schedule for its work and meet in predefined periods so that, every day or every week it can monitor the changes achieved as a result of the implementation of the National Strategy and initiate additional measures for more efficient reduction of poverty and social exclusion.

**5. The role of the municipalities and coordination and synchronization of the measures**

The implementation of the Strategy is related with a coordinated and comprehensive cooperation between the Government, the ministries and the institutions of the system, as well as cooperation between the state administrative institutions and the local authorities, as well as the nongovernmental sector.

It is necessary to ensure greater participation of the **local government** in the implementation of the measures, especially for the vulnerable groups. In that regard, building of human resource capacities of the local government authorities and the cooperation with the centers for social work represents the basis of an efficient implementation of the National Strategy. In addition to the strengthening of the municipalities it is necessary to include them in national level policy creation, especially with respect to policies related to the standard of living of the population and social inclusion.

The municipalities should recognize their interest to be active in reducing poverty and social exclusion and, based on the provisions from the Law on Local Self-Government, they should propose specific programs and activities to achieve these objectives.

In addition, the participation of the **nongovernmental organizations** in the segment involving the expression of the different interests of individual and groups at risk or facing social exclusion is very important. The activities of the local coordination bodies for social issues would contribute to achieving harmonization of the standpoints of the ULSG, EC, NGOs and other organizations. Their involvement, which was also accepted in the stage of development of this strategy, can be also directly achieved in the stage of implementation of the National Strategy.

The increasing of the public sensibility towards the areas stated in the National Strategy simultaneously raises the issue of accountability of the institutions responsible for undertaking activities and measures. At the same time, they are required to adapt to the requirements and the needs of the population and to initiate systemic changes with a view of achieving the objectives of the National Strategy. In this coordination process the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the municipalities need to monitor the implementation of the measures from this strategy and, if necessary, initiate changes or additions to the proposed measures and activities.

**6. Fiscal implications**

The implementation of the Strategy is related to the development of an efficient model, directed towards stimulating the processes, programs and measures which influence the reduction of poverty and social exclusion. This also entails upgrading the financing system which, in addition to the national Budget and the budgets of the local self-government also needs programmatic funds that could be secured on different bases, in accordance with the defined objectives of the National Strategy.

The involved ministries need to **envision in the action plans the fiscal implications** for implementation of activities for the current year within the framework of the total fiscal costs necessary to implement this strategy. This also **represents an increase of the funds needed to accomplish the objectives of the National Strategy** envisioned during the planning of the budget needs of the Government, the ministries, the local government and each of the organizations and institutions.

These increased funding will facilitate the realization of the objectives and the policies proposed in the National Strategy.

**7. Impact on the employment and poverty**

It is necessary to define **the national framework through the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, which will impose that every measure, regardless to which ministry it belongs, entering a parliamentary or a governmental procedure, has to incorporate the priority interest of contributing to increased employment**. This means, similarly to the obligation to declare the fiscal implications of every regulation, the institutions should **plan the implications on the labor market, i.e. how much will each measure impact the growth of employment, reduction of poverty and increase of social inclusion**.

This provides direct incentives for the ministries to plan and stimulate employment, by stating the **impact of the measure on employment**, as a necessary part of the overall policy for which they are responsible and with a view of using the available human resources. This refers to both national and local level, and it creates a priority obligation to plan and assess the measure from the point of view of the effect it causes with respect to employment and poverty reduction.

**8. Monitoring of the implementation of the strategy**

The monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy is a key process that should be based on annual action plans for implementation. Well-developed specific measures and activities for achieving the envisioned objectives in the Strategy and the accompanying indicators can be used to monitor the progress of the implementation of the Strategy. The **indicators** are enclosed with the Strategy.

In addition to the proposed basic indicators, additional indicators based on monitoring and evaluation priorities should be developed. Since the implementation of the Strategy will involve many entities, every entity should develop indicators from its own area.

**9. Reporting**

Based on the identified situations and changes, as well as the reports submitted by all of the authorities and institutions required to submit reports, **the Government of the Republic of Macedonia should discuss the annual report for implementation of the Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Inclusion 2010 – 2020 and enact conclusions, measures and activities** with proposals for changes and additions aimed at more efficient implementation of the activities and measures of the Strategy.

Previously, the annual report has to be discussed by the national coordination mechanism for implementation of the Strategy, as well as the municipalities, in the area of implementing the measures in a local context.

The assessments from the report will influence the development and financing of the operative plans for implementation of the National Strategy for the following year.

**10. Transparency**

It is necessary to increase the **transparency** of the strategic goals and needs which necessarily consume organizational, material, financial and institutional resources for the implementation of the strategy.

In order to **increase the public awareness** about social inclusion, it is necessary to activate the numerous associations, citizens’ associations, domestic and international experts and organizations from the social sphere in order to help adopt the commitments and the policies in the area of social inclusion. In addition, the organization of media events and promotions on the languages of all ethnic communities, contributes to greater sensitivity of the public for this significant Strategy which necessarily consumes organizational, material, financial and institutional resources for its implementation.

The persons that directly feel the consequences of the social exclusion, as well as everybody else in society require information about these needs. In addition they need to be educated and this education should be part of the procedures for implementing the strategy.

11. Software interconnectivity of the institutions responsible for the Strategy

To facilitate the process of monitoring and coordination of the measures, a software solution could be developed which will interconnect the institutions and will facilitate cross monitoring of the implementation and activities arising from the National Strategy. This will largely facilitate the evaluation of the effects from the implementation of the measures, as well as the comparison of the results based on the projected indicators from the EU 2020 Strategy. In addition, the sustainability of certain measures would be determined. The measures that are found not to be efficient or not to provide the expected responses, will be changed or appropriately adapted.

**Section 5 Assumptions and possible risks with barriers to the successful implementation of the Strategy and the planned measures**

**Assumptions**

* Commitment of all levels of society to the implementation of this strategy
* All stakeholders (national and public institutions, local government, donors and international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, private sector) should exhibit individual, institutional and personal responsibility and accountability for the implementation of the elements from the National Strategy
* The operationalization of the Strategy will be facilitated by enacting annual operational plans
* The implementation of the Strategy and all the efforts of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy will help improve the overall situation in the country and realize the policies envisioned in the European and the National strategy
* Effective coordination of the undertaken measures by all stakeholders, in order to multiply the influence to cover a broader spectrum of socially excluded groups

**Risks**

* Lack of an integrated approach to the plans for realization of the defined measures
* Inappropriate coordination when securing financial, material and political assets that will support the realization of the strategic commitments
* Lack of a program and project management system
* Lack of a system for monitoring and evaluation of the undertaken measures
* Insufficient information, consultation and inclusion of the stakeholders, communities and groups in the identification of the needs, the plans and the implementation of the defined measures
* There are no allocated budget assets for the realization of the planned measures
* Lack of measurable indicators fir monitoring the situation and determining the level of improvement

Section 6 Recommended next steps

1) In addition to the presented measures and proposals, the emphasis is on the need to **build a modern concept of behaving towards socially excluded people and the formation of a new social model**, which puts first the personality first, and not the reason for exclusion, the membership, diagnosis, handicap or any other basis for social inclusion of the person.

2) **When defining social inclusion policies, the policy makers should start with the nationally developed objectives and needs**. In addition they should follow and conform to the international indicators and the EU indicators used to measure social exclusion. With the defining the scope of the measures, based on predefined criteria and operationalized actions, the policy makers define the manner in which the social inclusion policy should be implemented and adapted to the needs and the requirements of the citizens. **Therefore, the Government should enact an operational plan of measures and activities with deadlines and implementing agents, which will also provide a time schedule for the implementation of the National Strategy**.

3) In order to achieve a realistic level of reduced poverty, we assess that it would be useful to **redefine it, or determine a realistic level or an expected threshold of poverty, as well as a minimum wage (as well as the measure involving an adequate minimal income) according to the current possibilities and capacities, which will be harmonized with the growth of the costs of living**. At the same time, when revising the objective, the analysis should take into account the priorities and the policies that will be defined within the ongoing process of coordination with the EU policies and the EU 2020 Strategy.

4) It is necessary to form **a model for measuring the innovation in Macedonia through various indicators defined in the European Union** in order for relevant institutions to be able to create policies aimed at raising awareness for innovations and stimulating the innovative processes, as a basis for greater employment and social inclusion.

5) It is necessary to analyze **the effects of the decision to gradually reduce the social contributions** in order to eliminate the possibility the reduced contributions to lead to restricted services and incomes (and thereby quality) in the public health, the public pension system, as well as public services to the unemployed. The poor people cannot financially afford the services in the private sector which can have an impact on restricting the access and the quality to the public social, health and other services for the socially vulnerable categories.

6) Accepting the European ideals in the area of social development and social inclusion requires the state and the institutions to **prepare and coordinate** in order to envision adequate, accessible, financially sustainable, adapted and efficient systems for social protection and social inclusion policies, as well as adequate incomes which will enable people to sustain a reasonable level of their living standard.

7) The findings for the social protection network suggest that it would be difficult to capture all socially vulnerable groups due to the lack of funds, staff and institutional resources. The role of social protection boils down only to mitigating and nor reducing or prevention of poverty. The changes and additions to **the social protection system facilitated the creation and improvement of the conditions for inclusion in the private sector** and the associations of citizens in the implementation of specific services from the field of social protection, which in turn can lead to an improvement of the quality and coming closer to the beneficiaries.

8) **The placement of a special focus of the social protection measures** on households with a lot of members, households where none of the members are employed, households where the head of the family is without education (or has not completed primary education), households with children, as well as households that live in rural and smaller urban areas (without Skopje); as well as **better targeting of the social transfers** to the target groups and implementing the policy of appropriate social fees, create opportunities to provide the beneficiaries with a better living standard and stimulate a greater social inclusion. It is necessary to provide for a decreasing, rather than increasing poverty and social inclusion.

9) **The improving of the methodological approach to the collection data for measuring and in-depth analytical monitoring** of poverty, the provided prerequisites for introducing new modalities in the Labor Force Survey and the continued harmonization with the EU SILC survey, in accordance with the changes enacted on the level of EUROSTAT, as well as the calculation of the costs for social protection according to the European methodology which covers the social excluded, the gender component, the ethnic groups and the regionally available data, as well as the improved definition of the status of the self-employed people, the unpaid family workers, the women on maternity leave and the pensioners (when they are employed, unemployed or inactive), the types of households like households with lots of members, without any employed member, households with children etc., enables a more detailed processing and dissemination of these data which are important for the implementation of social inclusion policies.

10) It is necessary to **connect** with a system software for social protection an social inclusion in order to identify the users and the services in this area in a unique manner and to monitor the costs of social protection, as well as the other positive effects that were mentioned previously, which leads to a unique information database.

**Section 7 Conclusion**

Social inclusion, as a process of integration of individuals in society, becomes an inevitable segment of the **sum of related concepts** which are a part of the public policies in the country and which are continuously upgraded and improved. The social inclusion and the active measures produced strengthen the bond between the individual and society which promotes social development and cohesion.

The records, the monitoring of the phenomena, the forms and the areas where social inclusion is present should be based on the **standards applied in the European Union and specified in the EU 202 Strategy**. During the implementation of these strategies and criteria, it is necessary to comply also with the specifics of the Republic of Macedonia, in correlation with the international standards and the EU standards.

The enactment of new solutions in the area of social policies has to be based on previous thorough analyses based on economic **benefits in the short and medium term, but also on the social costs and influences in the long run. In that context, the policies for active inclusion on the labor market**, as well as the opportunity to maintain the social costs (pensions, health protection, child protection, long term care and other social transfers) create, on an appropriate level the scope of the consumption and the activity of the total population.

The Government and the competent authorities should strengthen and support the **entrepreneurship and innovation** by creating conditions and opportunities to start new businesses, as well as improve the **competitiveness of the existing small and medium enterprises**, by defining specific measures and activities. The provision of **financial support to the business centers, the business incubators and the technological parks** will contribute to the realization of projects for organizing basic trainings on starting-up a business; training for existing entrepreneurs; promotions of entrepreneurship; consultant services; business networking; promotional activities (fairs, manifestations etc.) and for increased employment, reduced poverty and greater social inclusion.

The utilization of the **experiences and the best practices and effective policies from the countries of the European Union**, provides a basis for the planned measures and the expected effects, considering that they remain available and acceptable for the public and the social policy creators and implementers. At the same time, this knowledge and experience will be a part of the preparation of the state for synchronization and coordination of the social sphere measure.

According to the principles of the European Union and the national needs in the area of social inclusion, the National Strategy also takes into account the **gender dimensions at all levels and in all areas**, as one of the starting points for social exclusion, and the recommendations incorporate a gender sensitive approach when facing social challenges.

The findings of the National Strategy will serve as a basis for preparing the measures and activities for social inclusion, which will be then evaluated by the European Union. With the strengthening of the capacities and with a view on building the interests of the country, all authorities, organizations and institutions should form strategic visions and policies and make available the required knowledge in the area of the social sphere for the purposes of implementing the planned task.

**The expansion of the coverage and the rights of the citizens, in accordance with the principles of the European Union, as well as the implementation of the measures from the EU 2020 strategy, brings Macedonia closer to the EU policies in the social sphere, the commitments that exist in the union member countries**. The elimination of stereotypes from the past and accepting the numerous innovations and solutions in this field will help **facilitate the process of social inclusion** and overcome the negative positions and the viewpoints of various categories for vulnerable groups and the stigmatized socially excluded people.

1. Europe 2020, Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, page 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The values in this column are assumed as national targets until 2020, i.e. they are indicative and they need to be further harmonized and discussed. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. According to information from Secretariat for European Affairs at the Government of the Republic of Macedonia [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. One specific example of possible improvements in the policy of participating in payment for certain services that can be supported: Children age 1 and 5, and families whose income is less than 60% of the average monthly salary should be exempt from having to participate in payment: and children age from 6 to 18 should be exempt from payment of some services. The evaluation of the social status of the family should pay close attention to the incomes of the family because it seems that there are insufficient data in the system about family earnings, especially of self-employed people and people working under short term service contracts. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. This experience is based on the model applied in the office of the former British prime minister Mr. Tony Blair, who, during his first term in office, in the period 1997 – 2001 formed a special department for social exclusion in order to monitor the phenomena and submit annual reports about poverty and social exclusion. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)