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ANNEX I.1

to the Financing Agreement on the Annual action plan in favour of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2024

Action Document for EU for Rights and Security

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and annual and multiannual action plans and measures in the sense of Article 9 of IPA III Regulation and Article 23(2) of NDICI - Global Europe Regulation.

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	EU for Rights and Security Annual action plan in favour of North Macedonia for 2024
OPSYS	OPSYS business reference: ACT-62397
ABAC	ABAC Commitment level 1 number: JAD.1354913
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)	Yes “Rule of Law, Governance and Public administration reform” – 100%
EIP Flagship	Yes “VIII Digital Infrastructure”
Team Europe	No
Beneficiary of the action	The Action shall be carried out in North Macedonia
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
Window and thematic priority	Window 1: Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy (100%) Thematic Priority 3: Fight against organised crime/security (43.48%) Thematic Priority 5: Fundamental rights (56.52%)
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, Other significant SDG: SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

	SDG 10: Reduced inequalities			
DAC code(s)	151 Government & Civil Society-general (35.15%)15180 Ending violence against women and girls (35.15%) 160 Other Social Infrastructure & Services (21.37%)16030 Housing policy and administrative management (21.37%) 152 Conflict, Peace & Security (43.48%)15210 Security system management and reform (43.48%)			
Main Delivery Channel	12000 Recipient Government			
Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity			
Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition ¹	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	EIP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	EIP Flagship		YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
	Tags ² :		YES	NO
	Transport		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

¹ Please check the [Handbook on the OECD-DAC Nutrition Policy Marker](#).

² When a marker is Significant or Principal Objective, please indicate the relevant tags by selecting "YES" or "NO".

Energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Environment and climate resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Digital	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development (incl. private sector, trade and macroeconomic support)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Human Development (incl. human capital and youth)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Migration and mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Agriculture, food security and rural development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Rule of law, governance and Public Administration reform	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Digitalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES		NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
digital entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES		NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduction of Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUDGET INFORMATION

Amounts concerned	<p>Budget line: 15.020101.01</p> <p>Total estimated cost: EUR 12 000 000</p> <p>Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 11 500 000</p> <p>This action is co-financed in parallel co-financing by the national budget of North Macedonia</p>
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	for an amount of EUR 500 000
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION	
Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)	Direct management through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grants - Procurement Indirect management with entrusted entities
Final Date for conclusion of Financing Agreement	At the latest by 31 December 2025
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	3 years following the date of conclusion of the financing agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114(2) of the Financial Regulation
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement
Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement	12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement

1.2. Summary of the Action

The overall objective of the Action is to improve the respect of human rights and strengthen security. In view of achieving this objective, the Action aims at enhancing the response to gender-based and domestic violence and promoting the legal housing rights of the Roma people, as well as at strengthening the state response to security threats and risks posed by cybercrime, organised crime, terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism.

This Action aims to combat discrimination and promote the social integration of vulnerable groups, including children, women, LGTBI individuals, persons with disabilities, and minorities. The EU assistance will support North Macedonia in addressing gender-based and domestic violence and reducing the housing disparities faced by the Roma community. Furthermore, the Action seeks to enhance North Macedonia's security architecture by strengthening the country's response to various security threats and risks, such as cybercrime, organised crime, terrorism, radicalisation, and violent extremism.

The EU will continue to invest in improving the services to prevent and protect against gender-based violence. The Action will support specialised and other essential social services such as domestic violence and shelters for trafficking victims, providing immediate protection from danger to victims of abuse and their children/families, as well as a full range of psychological support, counselling, health-care, employment and legal services. This will be paired with strong outreach activities, creating awareness and fostering violence prevention among institutions, healthcare establishments, schools, municipalities and community organisations. The Action will contribute to ensuring the right of Roma people to legal housing. It will support preparing urban-spatial plans

for six municipalities with a high concentration of Roma people and complete technical documentation for future EU investments in urbanising Roma settlements. The Action will improve law enforcement agencies' performance and combat crime by international standards by sharing best practices, enhancing institutional coordination, refining investigative methods, upgrading forensic capacities, and improving the skills of anti-crime officers. The support will focus on upgrading counter-terrorism capabilities and implementing innovative strategies to address violent extremism and radicalisation within prisons. In addition, the Action aims to tackle the growing risks of cyber-attacks and information theft. To keep up with current and future cyber threats, the country will constantly improve its technical and operational capabilities to detect and respond to cyber security incidents. In that respect, a national body with operational capacities for cyber security will be established. This central operational-technical body will be responsible for preventive and reactive measures during security incidents. The body will provide on-site support for serious cyber security incidents, detect and evaluate incidents affecting government networks and national ICT systems, and strengthen the strategic capacity of North Macedonia for a secure cyber space.

The Action is aimed at implementing national and European strategic priorities foreseen under the IPA III Programming Framework³, Window 1 Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy - Thematic Priority 3: Fight against organized crime / security and Thematic Priority 5: Fundamental Rights.

1.3. Beneficiary of the Action

The Action shall be carried out in North Macedonia.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

Gender-based and domestic violence

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020- 2025⁴ and the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP)III^{5[2]}, provide the EU policy framework with actions for accelerating progress towards meeting international commitments and make the gender equality and women rights priorities of all external policies and actions. GAP calls for accelerating progress, focusing on the key thematic areas of engagement, including fighting against gender-based violence and promoting the economic, social and political empowerment of women and girls. In line with this, the EU Gender Action Plan III: Country-Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) for North Macedonia⁶, provides a roadmap for working with stakeholders at national, regional and multilateral levels in ensuring gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the EU accession process, including the fight against gender-based-violence. The action will contribute to the realisation of the EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 GAP III, in particular to its thematic area of engagement - Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence.

³ Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)8914 of 10 December 2021 on the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) Programming Framework for the period 2021-2027.

⁴ EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en - The "2020-2025 objectives" towards "2030, including gender", "20balance", "20im", "20decision", "21making"

⁵ EU GAP III https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/topics/gender-equality-and-empowering-women-and-girls_en?highlight=5139

⁶ EU GAP III CLIP for North Macedonia https://www.cas.europa.eu/delegations/public/north-macedonia/eu-gender-action-plan-iii-comm-hy-e-implementation-plan_en?is=229

North Macedonia has made significant efforts to address violence against women and domestic violence⁷. The country adopted the *Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*⁸ in January 2021, which provides a comprehensive framework for preventing, protecting, and responding to such cases. However, further steps are needed to align related laws and adopt operational procedures. To address this, the country adopted an *Action Plan for implementing the Istanbul Convention* in 2018, which outlines key activities and institutions to incorporate the Convention's provisions into national legislation. The *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2027* also includes gender-based violence as a specific objective⁹. The 2019 *Law on Social Protection*¹⁰ also outlines a framework for establishing and operating specialised services.

The *Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence* outlines actions and measures for victims' prevention, protection, and reintegration, including economic empowerment. The Law emphasises the importance of institutions acting with *due attention* to victims' interests and needs and acknowledges the problem of underreporting of violence due to distrust in institutions. It proposes a protocol for practical multi-sectoral cooperation involving all relevant institutions at national and local levels.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) currently tracks gender-based and domestic violence against women through data collected from 30 Social Work Centres (SWC)¹¹, but only for victims under the 2014 Law on Prevention, Protection and Combat against Domestic Violence. The new Law, enacted in 2021, requires all state administration bodies, courts, public prosecution, local self-government units, legal entities exercising public powers, and associations to collect statistical and administrative data on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence based on various data points. The new Law emphasises integrated data collection and protection and is subject to the *Law on Personal Data Protection*¹².

The *Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* designates police officers, professionals from social work centres, and health institutions and workers as competent institutions for dealing with women victims of violence. The SWC provide temporary care, medical assistance, social and health care access, and psychosocial intervention and treatment. Police officers perform risk assessments during their first contact with the victim, considering all factors that may increase the risk of future violence. The MLSP has established specialised services for women victims of gender-based and domestic violence in seven regions, as mandated by the Law. These services include 13 centres for women and their children who are victims of domestic violence, including eight that are part of local social work centres, two funded by the Ministry and managed by civil society organisations, and one supported by local self-government and managed by an association. There are also 11 specialised counselling centres for women victims of violence and domestic violence and eight specialised counselling centres for psychosocial treatment for perpetrators of domestic violence. Additionally, there are free SOS lines established and managed by civil society organisations, with the Ministry financing a mobile SOS line for the past four years.

Roma

The Roma community in North Macedonia is the most vulnerable minority group and faces institutional and social obstacles. The community represents 2.52% of the population and experiences discrimination in daily life, including a higher school dropout rate and exclusion from

⁷ The national legislation recognised and criminalised domestic violence, initially in 2004, by adding a separate chapter for domestic violence in the Family Law and in the Criminal code as an aggravating circumstance for several criminal acts include bodily injury, serious bodily injury, coercion, unlawful deprivation of liberty, endangerment of security and murder. The first separate law on domestic violence was adopted in September 2014 – Law on Prevention, Protection and Combating Domestic Violence, which came into force on the 1st of January 2015.

⁸ https://mlsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021_1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf

⁹ https://mlsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2022/strategija_2022_2027.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/e19cf6763a344becaddf059157344512.pdf>

¹¹ According to figures from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in the first six months of 2022 social services registered a total of 622 victims of gender-based violence and family violence, including 463 women, 116 men, and 83 children.

¹² <https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/606043d405e847ec92c7caed5c8bd389.pdf>

formal employment. Consequently, many Roma live in substandard conditions, lacking access to necessities like sanitation, safe drinking water, and public transportation.

The Constitution of North Macedonia guarantees non-discrimination and equality before the law, and the Ohrid Framework Agreement ensures adequate and equal representation of communities. The *Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination* defines different types and establishes the Commission for the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. The new *Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030* focuses on areas like employment, housing, education, health, culture, and poverty reduction. Implementing the previous strategy 2014-2020 and corresponding action plans still need to be completed.

In 2020, many Roma children could not attend primary or secondary school due to a lack of electronic devices or internet access for online classes. Only 1.16% of new enrollees were Roma children and dropout rates for primary and secondary education were estimated at 6% and 4%, respectively. There is no system or baseline data for reintegrating children who have not enrolled or left school early. While Roma education mediators are included in the Law on Primary Education, they still need to be considered for secondary education. Additionally, segregation in schools remains a significant issue. The percentage of Roma that have not completed primary education is significantly higher than the national average (e.g., in Bitola Municipality, 20% of such cases are among the Roma community).

Discrimination against Roma in health care is still widespread and goes largely unreported. Although there are no disintegrated data in the health statistics by ethnicity, the reports of UNDP 2011, UNDP 2017, AECOM 2018, and ESE 2019 show that the health status of the Roma community is significantly worse than other ethnic communities. Roma are at a disadvantage compared to non-Roma and have a considerably shorter life expectancy (ranging from 10 to 20 years), higher infant mortality rates by 25% compared to others and a higher incidence of chronic diseases.

According to the Social Mapping report in 2018, the employment rate of Roma is 23%, almost twice lower than the national average, while the unemployment rate of Roma is at a record high of 67%. The number of unemployed Roma is continuously increasing; 13,703 were registered as unemployed in 2020, compared with 9,239 in 2019. The number of Roma benefiting from active measures for employment is increasing (431 in 2021 against 86 in 2020).

Crime and terrorism

North Macedonia has implemented crucial legal frameworks to combat organised crime and terrorism, including the 2016 Criminal Code amendments and more than 30 laws that align with European standards. These laws criminalise trafficking in human beings, online child pornography, computer crime, and drug trafficking. Additionally, the Government has adopted multiple national strategies, including the *National Strategy for the Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism 2021-2024*, the *National Strategy for Capacity Building for Financial Investigations and Property Confiscation 2021-2023*, and the *National Strategy for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration 2021-2025*. The country also has specific strategies for countering terrorism and violent extremism, with related action plans. In June 2020, a National Plan for reintegration, resocialisation, and rehabilitation of foreign fighters returnees and their families (women and children) was adopted to prioritise the prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation.

The completion of the national strategies, the *Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Strategy for the Fight against Terrorism for 2023-2027*, including their corresponding action plans, is underway. These strategies align with the global systems of the United Nations and the European Union and prioritise four pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution/enforcement, and response. Numerous stakeholders will be involved in implementing these strategies, such as ministries, state institutions, international organisations, civil society, religious communities, local self-government, and the private sector.

The institutions that fight *organised crime* include specialised police units within the Ministry of Interior, a Financial Intelligence Unit under the Ministry of Finance, and Financial Investigation units within the Customs Administration, Financial Police, and Ministry of Interior. The intelligence services have been comprehensively reformed, with the National Security Agency (NSA) now an independent state body. Furthermore, the country has improved its technical infrastructure for communication interception systems and has enacted a new *Law on the Intelligence Agency*. The Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecuting Organised Crime and Corruption handles corruption and organised crime cases. In addition, the Agency for Management of Confiscated Assets manages properties confiscated in cases of organised crime and terrorism.

North Macedonia is actively participating in global efforts to combat *terrorism* as a trustworthy partner and member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. The country has ratified various international agreements and protocols to fight terrorism. By the commitments of the Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism for the Western Balkans, the government of North Macedonia has approved a National Plan for the reintegration, resocialisation, and rehabilitation of individuals who have returned from foreign armies and their families. The reintegration process follows Standard Operating Procedures to ensure a comprehensive and rights-based approach. North Macedonia acknowledges that countering terrorism requires a coordinated response from all relevant institutions because it is a complex security issue that affects everyone.

North Macedonia is making an important effort in the Prevention of Radicalization field. In order to create the structures and adopt the necessary measures for the prevention of radicalization, the country has recently approved their National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism 2023-2027, being an active participant in the activities organized under the Radicalization Awareness Network for the Western Balkans (RAN WB). The role played by the National Coordinator for Countering Violent Extremism and Counter-Terrorism and his office is a key element for succeeding in these efforts.

North Macedonia plays an active role in international police cooperation, especially with Europol. The partnership began with a strategic agreement in 2007 and was further strengthened by an operating agreement in 2011. Together, they combat trafficking in human beings, weapons smuggling, and drug trafficking. To facilitate information exchange, a secure communication link called SIENA was established. North Macedonia has also contributed to Europol's Analysis Projects on environmental crime and cybercrime. The country is participating in various Operational Action Plans in the context of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), which covers among others cybercrime, drugs and firearms trafficking, high risk criminal networks, organised property crime, environmental crime, combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings and financial crime. Furthermore, North Macedonia has a well-established cooperation framework with the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) through a working arrangement. Additionally, North Macedonia, together with all Western Balkan countries, has decided, during the EU-WB ministerial conference organised on 16 May 2023, to establish a second phase of the Roadmap on comprehensive small arms and light weapons control, in order to keep their prioritisation of the topic. The country fully commits to implementing the bilateral Western Balkans Joint Action Plan on Counterterrorism. This commitment includes strengthening counter-terrorism structures and strategies, preventing and countering violent extremism, addressing the challenges of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters, and improving the assessment of money laundering risks. To achieve these goals, a national coordinator oversees inter-institutional cooperation through the National Committee for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Fight against Terrorism. The Ministry of Interior's Department is responsible for handling terrorism-related issues.

Cybersecurity and cybercrime

According to the 2020 International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI), North Macedonia ranks the 24th in Europe and the 38th globally, scoring 89.92. This index assesses countries' commitment to cybersecurity at a global level, aiming to raise awareness about

the importance and various dimensions of cybersecurity, as well as evaluate countries' Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resilience and reliability. The index identified legal and cooperative measures as strengths for the country, while technical measures were highlighted as an area for potential growth¹³.

North Macedonia is a member of the *Budapest Convention on Cybercrime* and has actively participated in *Europol's Analysis Projects on environmental crime and cybercrime*. The country is engaged in various forms of cooperation with Europol, including cybercrime, migrant smuggling, and counterterrorism. While North Macedonia lacks a comprehensive cybersecurity law, it has relevant legislation in place, including the *Law on Interception of Communication, Law on Electronic Communications, Law on e-Commerce, Law on Electronic Management and Electronic Services, Law on Data in Electronic Form and Electronic Signature, Law on Personal Data Protection, Law on the Security of Network and Information Systems, and Law on Free Access to Public Information*.

North Macedonia is benefitting from the activities of the Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Centre (WB3C) in Podgorica, established upon the France/Slovenia initiative. It is a training center in the fields of cyber crime, cyber security and cyber diplomacy, providing in-service trainings for specialised agents, training for trainers in the specialised training schools, meetings of professional for exchanges of good practices, initiates or facilitates cooperation between administrative, technical and educational institutions of the Western Balkan countries.

North Macedonia is also participating in the regional IPA-funded project on cybercrime, *CyberSEE – Co-operation on Cybercrime: Enhanced action on cybercrime and electronic evidence in South-East Europe and Türkiye* implemented by the Council of Europe, that focuses on increasing the capacities of criminal justice authorities to fight cybercrime, including online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and to access digital evidence. *CyberSEE* is complementary to the proposed Action, and builds on previous projects iPROCEEDS that targeted crime proceeds on the internet and focused on strengthening the capacity of authorities in the IPA region to search, seize and confiscate cybercrime proceeds and prevent money laundering on the Internet.

North Macedonia is also currently benefitting from EU support to bolster its cyber-resilience in the framework of the EU funded project “*Cybersecurity Rapid Response for Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia*”, designed to improve the capacities of cybersecurity governance structures, to put in place normative frameworks and to increase operational capacities in cyber incidents management.

North Macedonia has set out five key objectives in its *Cybersecurity Strategy and Action Plan for 2018-2022*. These objectives include building cyber resilience, strengthening capacities and culture, combating cybercrime, improving cyber defence, and promoting cooperation and information exchange. While the Strategy aligns with the EU and NATO cybersecurity strategies, it requires more essential elements such as legislation, competent authorities, cooperation frameworks, and Critical Information Infrastructures (CIIs). Additionally, more performance indicators are needed to evaluate the strategy's effectiveness. The National Cybersecurity Council and Operational Implementation Body are not yet fully established. The Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) has formed a working group involving various ministries and agencies representatives to develop a new National Cybersecurity Strategy to address these gaps.

The national cyber security strategy is in its final phase and it is expected that by the end of 2023 it will be fully completed together with the action plans of the concerned institutions that participated in its creation.

The National Strategy for Cyber Security 2023-2027 is a strategic document whose purpose is, through a whole range of activities and measures, to ensure a safe, resilient and reliable digital environment, which makes North Macedonia a safe place for online activity and work, with advanced human and technical capacities.

¹³ <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/global-cybersecurity-index.aspx>

Through the achievement of strategic goals, the protection and promotion of national interests in and through cyberspace, greater economic growth and prosperity is enabled. In times of hybrid warfare, no less important is the contribution that a secure and resilient cyber environment makes to strengthening national capacities in the general national security of the state.

The new cybercrime strategy, prepared with EU support received under the IPA 2020 project “*EU support for Rule of Law*”, is expected to be finalized and approved by the end of 2023 or beginning of 2024.

Furthermore, the *National Strategy on Building Resilience and Confronting Hybrid Threats 2021-2025* places significant importance on cybersecurity prevention in North Macedonia. This Strategy integrates cybersecurity into critical areas such as the political sector, economy, defence sector, civil sector, infrastructure, and the ICT domain. Recognising the need to enhance societal resilience, particularly as a NATO member country, the Strategy aligned with the standard EU framework for hybrid threat prevention established in 2016 and was initiated by the EEAS in 2019.

The Government also acknowledges disinformation as a cyber threat and, in 2019, proposed a draft Action Plan against Disinformation. This plan consists of two main components: security measures that include cyber protection and prevention actions and proactive steps to address the issue. The civil society organisations warned about possible risks of censorship deriving from the Action Plan, while activities aimed to fight disinformation were mainly implemented by CSOs and funded by donor community. The Agency for Electronic Communications and the National Centre for Computer Incidents Response (MKD-CIRT) were established in 2016 as the official national contact point for addressing security incidents in networks and information systems. However, due to the lack of a comprehensive legal framework and sufficient capacity, MKD-CIRT faces limitations in fulfilling all necessary tasks, including those mandated by the EU Network and Information Security Directive (NIS). Additionally, MKD-CIRT requires more staff to meet the growing demands.

MKD-CIRT actively conducts cybersecurity awareness activities with state institutions. Unfortunately, many institutional websites and databases are poorly maintained, making them highly vulnerable to small-scale cyber-attacks. There have been reported cases where these websites failed safety and security tests. The plan is to involve private companies in cybersecurity activities. Moreover, MKD-CIRT carries out general awareness campaigns through social networks and various media channels.

The Government has taken steps to improve cybersecurity and promote awareness, including safe internet content in primary education and offering cybersecurity programmes for bachelor's and master's degrees¹⁴. It has also set in place a dedicated Cybersecurity Task Force as part of the State Electoral Committee, following the severe attacks on government infrastructure for the 2020 elections. Despite these efforts, these cyber-attacks demonstrate the need for further improvements in the country's cyber defence capabilities and infrastructure. The Ministry of Information Society and Administration's insufficient capacity to develop policies and coordinate cooperation among electronic communications institutions is a significant hurdle. Addressing this challenge is crucial to effectively addressing cybersecurity issues.

To enhance their cybersecurity efforts, domestic institutions should actively engage in European networks such as ENISA (the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity) and the CSIRTs Network (Computer Security Incident Response Team network composed of appointed CSIRTs from EU Member States) and CERT-EU.

The Ministry of the Interior is crucial in addressing cyber-related challenges, particularly internal security and combating cybercrime. It houses a dedicated Sector for Computer Crime and Digital Forensics responsible for conducting cybercrime investigations and handling electronic evidence, including digital forensics. Additionally, the Ministry actively develops cybersecurity strategies

¹⁴ <https://ncsi.ega.gov.mk/?fbclid=IwAR0>

and collaborates on a complementary cybercrime strategy that aligns with the needs and objectives of law enforcement.

The Ministry of Defence and the Military Academy are critical players in North Macedonia's cybersecurity strategy, responsible for training and education. The National Strategy Action Plan aims to strengthen cooperation with NATO and the EU in dealing with hybrid threats, with the Ministry of Defence taking the lead. However, the country needs formal cybersecurity cooperation with the private sector and civil society, relying on *ad hoc* and informal consultations. Cybersecurity is essential to digital transformation and requires a comprehensive whole-of-Government approach to address critical infrastructure, digital skills, e-government services, and personal data protection.

The proposed Action will address the findings and recommendations of the European Commission's 2023 Report on North Macedonia¹⁵ in **Chapter 23: Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, Chapter 19: Social Policy and Employment, and Chapter 24: Justice, Freedom and Security.**

This Action is designed to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the **IPA III Programming Framework, thematic priority 5: Fundamental rights and thematic priority 3: Fight against organised crime/security**, within **Window 1: Rule of law, fundamental rights, and democracy**, related to ensuring gender equality, combating all forms of sexual and gender-based; domestic violence and discrimination; and fight against organised crime, and dismantle criminal networks, including drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings, cybersecurity, cyber resilience and fight against cybercrime and financial crime. The Action will contribute to achieving objective 5.2 of the IPA III **Strategic Response 2021-2027**, which aims to fight discrimination and protect children and women, people with disabilities, LGBTI and minorities; and objective 3.2 focus on the modernisation of the operational tools for combating organised crime.

The Action aims to contribute to the objectives outlined in the **Joint Action Plan on Counterterrorism for the Western Balkans**. It focuses on establishing a robust framework for countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism, promoting effective information exchange and cooperation, combating money laundering and terrorism financing, and strengthening the protection of citizens and infrastructure. The Action also aligns with agreements between North Macedonia, **EUROPOL**, and **EUROJUST**, facilitating cooperation in combating international crime. Furthermore, it supports the Southeast Europe 2020 Strategy by promoting cross-border collaboration among border security agencies to fight corruption, trafficking, transnational crime, and terrorism. Overall, the Action plays a crucial role in enhancing regional security and addressing the challenges in the Western Balkans.

The proposed Action will significantly contribute to achieving the objectives of the **Western Balkans' Economic and Investment Plan¹⁶ (EIP)**. According to the EIP, the Rule of law, respect for human rights, and the effective functioning of democratic institutions and public administration are central to the accession process and are the main engines for the region's economic recovery. In addition, the Action aligns with the EIP's recommendation to foster cooperation among regional partners and with the EU to address specific security challenges, including countering terrorism, extremism, money laundering, etc. Furthermore, the Action is consistent with the EIP's focus on enhancing cybersecurity capacity and combating cybercrime in the digital sector, particularly for surveillance purposes. This aligns with the EIP's recommendations to bolster cybersecurity measures and tackle cyber threats effectively. The interventions under this Action have been selected based on their relevance and contribution to the implementation of national sector strategies and their link to the accession negotiations:

- **Strategy for Gender Equality 2022-2027** and its Action Plan 2022-2024 aims at accomplishing gender equality in a society in which women and men, girls and boys have equal rights, access to resources, opportunities, and protection in all spheres of life, as a

¹⁵ SWD(2023) 693 final

¹⁶ COM(2020) 641 final

condition for complete and sustainable economic, demographic and social development and progress of the country.

- **National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2022-2026 and Operational Plan 2022-2024** define measures for preventing hate speech and violence as all forms of discrimination.
- **National Strategy 2020-2025 and its Action Plan 2020-2022 for Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence** aims to prevent and protect children from violence in North Macedonia. The plan includes measures to address peer violence and related mental health issues through primary and secondary school prevention programmes focusing on non-violent communication and conflict management skills. The Strategy also aims to build the capacity of institutions and services within the health, social, educational, police, and justice systems to support all children who are victims of violence.
- **National Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030**, among other objectives, seeks to provide permanent, dignified, and non-segregated housing for Roma, increase the coverage of Roma children and improve their success in all spheres of education.
- **Action Plan for protection, promotion, and fulfilment of the human rights of Roma women and girls 2022-2024** foresees activities regarding improved effective support of Roma women and girls of all forms of gender-based and domestic violence.
- **National Strategy against Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism 2021-2024**. The strategic objectives of this Strategy are to be standardised with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Fifth Money Laundering EU Directive on the prevention of the use of the financial system for money laundering or terrorist financing to protect the integrity of the financial sector effectively and the economy from threats of money laundering and financing terrorism and to contribute to the strengthening of the national safety and security.
- **National Strategy for Capacity Building for Financial Investigations and Property Confiscation 2021-2023**. The Strategy and the Action Plan are essential steps in the fight against crime. They are expected to strengthen the coordination between the competent institutions for financial investigations.
- **National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and irregular Migration 2021-2025**. The National Strategy and Action Plan aim to act as a tool and a mechanism for uniting all relevant state and non-state stakeholders, as well as the international partners, in the common understanding of the situation regarding the trafficking of human beings and irregular migration and to facilitate a resolution of the challenges.
- **National Strategy for building resilience and confronting hybrid threats (2021-2025)**. This strategy aims to bolster the country's capacity to effectively handle multifaceted threats or crises that pose risks to our society and democratic principles. It seeks to achieve this by increasing awareness about hybrid threats, identifying responsibilities and stakeholders, establishing action plans, and mobilising resources to enhance national resilience by engaging the entire community. Furthermore, the strategy aims to cultivate a prepared society capable of promptly detecting, responding to, and recovering from such challenges with the active involvement of all relevant parties.

2.2. Problem Analysis

Short problem analysis

Gender-based and domestic violence

In 2011, North Macedonia has signed the *Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* and ratified it in 2018. The *Istanbul Convention (IC)* entered into force in July 2018, including the adoption of the IC National Action Plan (2018-2023). The Plan main objectives are on harmonizing the national legislation with the provisions of the Convention; fulfilment of obligations on the prevention of GBV, establishing an effective protection system and services of victims, and prosecution and punishment of

perpetrators. North Macedonia has submitted a State Report to GREVIO in April 2022¹⁷. Additionally, a shadow report has been produced by group of civil organizations led by the Helsinki Committee for the period August 2020-September 2021.¹⁸ In regard to implementation of Istanbul Convention, the GREVIO has published *Baseline Evaluation Report*¹⁹ in September 2023, noting a list of recommendations for further improvement of provision of social services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence and advancement of institutional response through enhanced implementation of integrated policies for preventive and protection intervention and treatment programmes and data collection. Thus, the Comments submitted by North Macedonia on GREVIO's final report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention,²⁰ in September 2023, are in line on strengthened preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The ratification of the Istanbul Convention has initiated positive changes in the national legislation such as adopting the new Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2021), amending the Criminal Code with the provisions of the Convention and adopting standards for the establishment of specialized services. New specialized services are being opened in the local centers for social work, however, most need capacity building to meet the standards.

In October 2023, North Macedonia has ratified the ILO Convention No. 190, the first international labour standard to address violence and harassment in the world of work.

Due to inappropriate evidence of violence and a lack of systematic follow-up, it is challenging to assess the burden of gender-based and domestic violence against women in North Macedonia. However, an OSCE-led study²¹ found that 45% of women in North Macedonia have experienced some form of intimate partner violence since the age of 15, and 30% have experienced sexual harassment. Recent data also shows that 82% of domestic violence victims are women. Women's attitudes and perceptions of violence against women²² contribute to low disclosure and reporting rates. In 2020, registered domestic violence cases increased to 1,531 victims, including 1,161 women, 249 men, and 121 children²³.

This UN Country Analysis 2022²⁴ showed that gender stereotypes about the role of women in society have kept women from participating fully in the labour market and also result in violation of women's rights. The social conditioning leads to women not reporting domestic violence cases much less trying to seek help. Women from ethnic communities and women with disabilities are more vulnerable to gender-based violence and unable to realise their full potential.

The first Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP)²⁵ has been released by the UN Women office in North Macedonia beginning of September 2023, as a document that encompasses quantitative and qualitative data analysis about the situation of the gender equality in the country. The CGEP has shown that, in general, the country has demonstrated increasing effort to implement legislation to promote gender equality and protect women's rights over the last decade. However, national action plans on gender equality, violence against women, and women, peace and security lack adequate allocated budget for their full implementation to achieve concrete impact in the lives and wellbeing of women.

17 [1] GREVIO state report from North Macedonia 2022 <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-inf-2022-5-state-report-north-macedonia/1680a618d5>

18 Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in North Macedonia, available online: <https://mhcc.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/draft-shadow-report-grevio-final-mk.pdf>

19 https://rm.coe.int/baseline-evaluation-report-on-north-macedonia_1680ac7962

20 https://rm.coe.int/gvt-comments-baseline-evaluation-report-on-north-macedonia_1680ac7962

21 https://www.osce.org/files/documents/3/5/419264_1.pdf

22 <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/04/2021-public-perceptions-of-gender-equality-and-violence-against-women>

23 Source of data: Administrative data obtained by MLSP based on information gathered from 30 Social Work Centers. Due to type of violence, the most present were physic and physical violence, and less present were economic and sexual violence.

24 <https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/207326-north-macedonia-common-country-analysis-2022-update>

25 <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/09/country-gender-equality-profile-of-north-macedonia>

The Safe Community Affiliate Support Centre was established by the Institute of Public Health in 2004 for violence prevention in the health sector. Multiple shelter centres have been opened nationwide since then, followed by the first Family Centre for specialised counselling and psychotherapy services for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Although these efforts are a step forward, further action is necessary to achieve Sustainable Development Goals related to violence. Services do not reach all areas of the country, leaving many victims in rural areas without adequate protection.

The proposed Action will build on the IPA III Action Document 2022 "*EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality*", which provides seed funding for the establishment and functioning of new specialised services and the expansion of existing ones for victims of gender-based and domestic violence by creating modern services to provide counselling, sheltering, support and reintegration services for victims, including the LGBTI community. This Action will provide operating grants to successful IPA III 2022 grantees and other service operators in the country to maintain, expand and introduce new protection and support services and integrate them into the national public social services system. The operating grants will support service operators to (1) improve the in-house services provided to them, which should cover a broad spectrum of support, such as prevention, counselling, sheltering, legal assistance, labour market activation, assistance healthcare and others, and (2) ensure that services meet national and international standards and get/remain licenced by the MLSP²⁶. Special attention will be paid to the social reintegration of victims into the labour market, health, education and the social protection system.

The fight against gender-based and domestic violence requires coordination across different institutions and policies. One of the main challenges is the lack of comprehensive data on the topic, including cases involving women with disabilities, convictions, and sentences. The Action aims to address this data gap by implementing a national online register for cases of violence against women and domestic violence, supported by an interoperability platform and integrated into existing data management systems in the country.

Legal housing for Roma

The Roma community suffers from some of the most inadequate housing conditions in the country, residing in poorly developed settlements with badly constructed housing units that often lack formal registration following urban-spatial and construction legislation. Overcrowding is widespread, with many Roma families living in homes that provide less than 5 square metres per person. This situation has resulted in a negative perception of Roma by most non-Roma communities, leading to discrimination in various areas and a lower quality of life. In addition, these conditions have contributed to lower school attendance, lower employment rates, shorter life expectancies, higher mortality rates, increased migration, and higher participation in the informal economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed systemic shortcomings, particularly in the Roma community, where many settlements lacked basic infrastructure such as access to water, sewerage, and paved roads. The lack of such infrastructure was especially critical during the pandemic, as frequent hand washing and disinfection were recommended but not readily accessible in many Roma settlements²⁷.

Previous analysis and mapping have shown that approximately 28% of Roma have yet to legalise their housing units, mainly due to the lack of a detailed urban plan in their municipality or the financial burden of the legalisation procedure, which involves several stages and various documents. However, a new draft Law on Legalisation of Illegally Constructed Buildings has been returned for further consultation and is anticipated to be approved by the Assembly.

²⁶ Another EU-project will support the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to establish a monitoring system of the quality of the social services and upgrade the methodological basis for the state financing of the public services in the social area.

²⁷ North Macedonia Roma COVID-19 Emergency Response and Social Inclusion Project". November 2020.

A Detailed Urban Plan (DUP) is essential for achieving the legalisation process and meeting the housing standards. However, over the past 25 years, municipalities have failed to secure appropriate funding for the urbanisation and integration of Roma settlements into the general and detailed urban planning process. This has exacerbated legalisation-related problems, resulting in the exclusion of many Roma settlements from the legalisation process. The delay in implementing measures to prepare urban plans exacerbates the housing crisis for the Roma community. Consequently, the (re)construction of basic infrastructure such as water supply, sewerage networks, and electricity connections is not legally possible, leading to substandard living conditions. To address this issue, the EU provides financial support for creating new detailed urban plans and legalising several municipality dwellings, including Vinica, Suto Orizari, Bitola, Prilep, Stip, Delchevo, Kichevo, and Veles.

The proposed Action aims to support the preparation of urban-spatial plans in six municipalities with a significant concentration of Roma people, based on feasibility studies conducted in 2022 by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The aim is to enable the construction and improvement of urban infrastructure, including social housing, by legalising Roma settlements by creating detailed urban plans. The Action will produce technical documentation for future EU investments in urbanising Roma settlements and facilitate partnerships between the MLSP and Local Self-Government Units (LSGUs) to amend municipal General Urban Plans (GUPs) and Detailed Urban Plans (DUPs).

Crime and terrorism

North Macedonia is dedicating significant efforts and resources to combat organised crime, which threatens the security of its citizens, economic development, the rule of law, and democracy. The country has achieved notable progress in investigating, prosecuting, and convicting organised crime and terrorism cases. Furthermore, North Macedonia has demonstrated its commitment to information sharing with relevant institutions, including Europol. Additionally, local mechanisms to prevent and counter violent extremism are in place. However, despite these improvements, there remains a need for continuous updates to police actions and investigative techniques due to the dynamic and increasingly interconnected nature of organised crime.

Addressing *organised crime* requires a robust strategic vision, political will and consensus, regional cooperation, and substantial state investments. Such crime is often hidden within legal structures, making it flexible and difficult to detect. Successful investigations demand extensive training, perseverance, and the utilisation of specialised techniques, including digital forensic and access to data and digital evidence, interviews, informants, searches, surveillance, and other investigative methods, to accurately determine the nature and scope of criminal enterprises. Moreover, it is crucial to conduct parallel financial investigations in a systematic way to go after criminal assets, as well as scope investigations to dismantling organised crime networks. North Macedonia will work towards fulfilling the recommendations given in the Final Report from the Peer Review Mission on Countering organised crime and corruption conducted in June 2022.

Conventional policing primarily reacts to crimes after they occur and are reported. However, combating organised crime necessitates proactive approaches based on criminal intelligence analysis. Organised criminal groups frequently commit unreported crimes, requiring scrutiny of financial records, interviews with informants and citizens, and surveillance activities to determine whether an illegal activity has occurred. The proactive approach comprises gathering intelligence followed by a criminal investigation, wherein information is evaluated, analysed, and used to support informed decision-making. Some jurisdictions assign intelligence gathering and analysis to law enforcement agencies. In contrast, others employ trained analysts who assess financial and business records, conduct background checks on individuals, analyse reports from police surveillance, use special investigative techniques, and gather related information. The investigation phase determines whether the gathered intelligence and analysis can establish a connection to the criminal activities of groups or networks.

The Action aims to strengthen the capacities of the police and other law enforcement agencies by focusing on enhancing human resource management, retention policies, and investigative capabilities. Specifically, it seeks to improve hybrid and organised crime investigation skills, employing pre-emptive, preventive, strategic, and tactical approaches.

Tackling *terrorism* and radicalisation is another significant challenge to security and democracy. Given the current era of globalisation, sustainable progress in this priority area can only be achieved through well-developed regional and international cooperation. North Macedonia is investing in enhancing its capacities and coordination at national and international levels through specific strategies and specialised bodies such as the National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism.

The Action will bolster the capabilities of law enforcement agencies to combat transnational organised crime and terrorism threats. It aims to enhance abilities and cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts and implement national counter-terrorism and counter-hybrid threat exercises to assess the functionality, proactiveness, and efficiency of the National Counter Terrorism Action Team in coordinating institutional agencies and non-governmental bodies. The action will support the implementation of the new Arrangement for the implementation of a Joint Action Plan on Counterterrorism for the Western Balkans between the European Commission and the Ministry of Interior of North Macedonia that was signed in December 2022, and which upgrades cooperation in the field of counterterrorism, and prevention and countering violent extremism. Furthermore, it aims to address the issue of violent extremism and radicalisation in prisons, including the reintegration and resocialisation of former prisoners.

Cybersecurity and cybercrime

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) use in North Macedonia has increased recently. This expansion has played a crucial role in driving globalisation and has significantly contributed to the development of the economy, living standards, and societal well-being. However, the growing reliance on services provided in cyberspace also means that dysfunctional ICT systems and severe cyber-attacks can significantly negatively impact the functioning of the public and private sectors and society. As the reliance on new technologies and the demand for greater availability of services in cyberspace increases, it becomes imperative for users and institutions to enhance their awareness of the importance of data integrity, authenticity, and confidentiality. The communication networks are interconnected with global communication networks, which means that cybersecurity incidents occurring elsewhere can affect the cyberspace and services of North Macedonia, and vice versa.

Global connectivity offers complete anonymity, which enhances the ability of malicious users to gain unauthorised access, steal, and misuse sensitive information. Globalisation and anonymity enable malicious users to launch easier attacks on predetermined victims and carry out much larger-scale operations and attacks. Strengthening national capacities to deal with cyber threats and improving cybersecurity at the national level is vital for North Macedonia.

In that respect, a National body with operational capacities for cyber security will be established. This central operational-technical body will be responsible for preventive and reactive measures during security incidents. The body will provide on-site support for serious cyber security incidents, detect and evaluate incidents affecting government networks and national ICT systems, and strengthen the strategic capacity of North Macedonia for a secure cyber space. The body will establish the necessary cooperation mechanisms, including exchange of information (including personal data necessary to carry out investigations) at strategic and operational level, with law enforcement authorities.

The national body with operational capacities unites at least the following functions:

- Single point of contact
- National authority responsible for cyber security
- National Computer Security Incidents Response Team

- National authority for managing large-scale computer security incidents and crises (Secure Operations Center)

The National Cyber Security Authority will have the role of Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for cyber security. The SPOC will be responsible not only for coordinating the response to issues related to the security of network and information systems in the country but will also have a key role in cross-border cooperation with other countries and the EU. The SPOC is expected to ensure effective cross-border cooperation with relevant authorities of other countries and organizations. The SPOC encourages smooth cross-sectoral cooperation with other competent authorities in other countries.

A national body with operational capacities for cyber security will perform the function of the National Authority responsible for cyber security (National Competent Authority), with the following competences:

- Cooperation with the state authorities responsible for the tasks related to the detection of cyber-threats, cyber-crime, the National and other CSIRTs, sectors with highly critical infrastructure and essential and important subjects. This cooperation enables a comprehensive understanding of cyber threats, faster and more effective responses to serious cyber incidents and enhanced cooperation with international and industrial partners;
- Cooperation with the supervisory authorities in resolving incidents that result in violations of the rights to the protection of personal data, ensuring operational independence in relation to the subjects of the public administration that are under supervision. The state ensures that the supervisory and enforcement measures imposed on the essential subjects are effective, proportionate and dissuasive.

For the work of the National Authority for Cyber Security, the Government will also provide additional technical, professional, human and financial resources, which will enable it to respond to the growing need for professional support on the spot for critical ICT systems and services, as well as for institutions of special public interest.

Through the National Authority for Cyber Security, it will be possible to strengthen the strategic capacity of North Macedonia and ensure a positive impact on the progress towards a safe cyber space, enabling the state to detect, react and defend against malicious cyber-attacks.

Cybercrime can manifest in various forms, from Internet abuse and scams to sophisticated and complex systems attacks. It can be motivated by different factors and executed by multiple agents. Given the wide range of cybercrimes and the diverse institutions and organisations responsible for managing and combating cybercrime, it is crucial to establish, building on results achieved by existing and previous projects such as iPROCEEDS, a detailed and specialised national plan for cybercrime management, including crimes facilitated in cyberspace. This plan should address the cybercrime problem and its challenges, define preventive measures, and protect essential societal functions. The most effective way to prevent cybercrime is to provide comprehensive guidelines and solutions that integrate cyber hygiene into the culture and mindset of the society. Inter-agency and multi-disciplinary approaches are essential to tackle cybercrime efficiently.

The public and private sectors need access to timely and accurate information and recommendations for cybersecurity and the ability to cooperate in the event of cyber incidents. Therefore, it is necessary to identify all relevant cybersecurity capabilities among the various stakeholders and define specific jurisdictions and activities to enhance cyber safety and manage cyber incidents. The ultimate objective is to safeguard critical infrastructure within the country and enable relevant institutions to employ appropriate solutions to defend national interests, thereby demonstrating preparedness for severe and complex cyber threats.

This initiative will strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies to combat cybercrime and enhance national cybersecurity.

Main stakeholders

- **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP).** One of the competencies of the MLSP is creating a legal, strategic and institutional framework for protecting victims from all forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence. The MLSP is also responsible for coordinating the line ministries and governmental institutions to integrate Roma issues into the central socio-economic policies and action plans.
- **Ministry of Interior (MoI).** Within its competence, the Ministry assists citizens, legal entities and state bodies in realising prescribed rights and obligations, protecting life and personal security of citizens and property. All police stations dispose of specific instructions in case of reports and actions of victims of domestic violence. There are also handbooks prepared by the Ministry (Providing Gender-Sensitive Support Services to Victims of Domestic Violence and – Reminder for the conduct of police officers in cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence).
- **Ministry of Health (MoH).** The Ministry of Health is responsible for setting the health system's overall strategic direction and priorities; developing legislation, regulations, standards, policies and directives to support those strategic directions. The Ministry of Health has integrated free examinations for victims of sexual violence in the programme of active attention to the health of mothers and children.
- **Ministry of Local Self-Government (MLSG).** MLSG allocates funds in the budget to support the implementation of the Local Action Plans for integrating Roma people on the local level. The Ministry provides funds for implementing housing, employment, education and healthcare activities, depending on the area where the municipality has developed a Local Action Plan (LAP).
- **Ministry of Defence (MoD).** The MoD is responsible for implementing the Cyber Defence Strategy that differs from cybersecurity mainly in the nature and severity of cyber-attacks, with no opportunity to define criteria.
- **Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA)** is the specialised government body for coordinating the activities for developing information society as listed mainly in the Strategic Plan of MISA and the Public Administration Reform Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022. MISA performs tasks related to integrated information and communication network, databases, interconnection and data exchange, safety aspects and development of infrastructure of state administration bodies, legal and other entities assigned by law to perform public authorizations. MISA was the partner in the “Advancing Cybersecurity Capacities for Digital Transformation“ project, implemented in 2022 by the Estonian e-Governance Academy (eGA).
- **National Coordination Body for the Protection of Children from Abuse, Violence and Neglect** was constituted with Governmental Decision in December 2017. Its purpose is to monitor and coordinate the implementation of activities to protect children from abuse and neglect and ensure annual reporting.
- **Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (CPPD).** CPPD is the main body for prevention and protection against discrimination, established based on the Law on the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination adopted in January 2021. As an independent legal entity, CPPD has the competency to process complaints against all natural and legal persons.
- **National Coordination Body for Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.** It includes representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Justice and other civil society organisations. The National Coordination Body performs, among others, the following tasks: coordinates the work of the institutions in the field of prevention and protection from gender-based violence against women and domestic violence; promotes the principle of equality and elimination of stereotypes about

gender roles; coordinates and monitors the collection of data on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence according to predetermined indicators.

- **Social Work Centres (SWCs).** SWCs are institutions with public authorisations for performing social protection activities, such as administering social protection rights, taking decisions about family law matters, acting per the criminal law regulations, and performing other activities determined by law. Eight SWCs operate centres for women victims (and their children) of domestic violence, which are an integral part of their organisational structure.
- **National Coordination Body (NCB) Roma.** NCB has the specific role of observing and directing the implementation of strategies and policies for Roma's social inclusion and integration. NCB should ensure effective coordination between state institutions and civil society organisations; oversee the implementation of national action plans; prepare annual operations plans, periodic monitoring and evaluation, including the preparation reports, and a database on the social inclusion of Roma.
- **Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for Support of Roma.** This Parliamentary Group was formed in February 2021. One of the goals is to support Roma's rights, inclusion, and integration in societal flows in North Macedonia.
- **Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for Support of LGBTI rights.** This Parliamentary Group was formed in February 2018. The inter-party parliamentary group promotes the rights of the LGBTI community, to build a society in which sexual orientation and gender identity will not be an obstacle to the full enjoyment of human rights and freedoms.
- **Local Self-Government Units (LSGUs) - Municipalities.** Municipalities, as local self-government units, are legal entities under the Law on the territorial organisation of local self-government and the Law on the City of Skopje. According to these laws, the country has 80 municipalities and the city of Skopje. According to the competencies and responsibilities of the LSGUs, the municipalities are directly responsible for the municipality's local economic and urban development.
- **Cybercrime and Digital Forensic Sector of the Ministry of Interior.** This Unit investigates with the support of the CIRT. This Unit resulted from merging the Cybercrime Unit within the Department for Suppression of Organised and Serious Crime with the Forensic Department of the Ministry of Interior, intending to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- **National Cybersecurity Council** was established in July 2020 by the National Computer Security Strategy 2018-2022. This Council comprises the ministries of Defence, Interior and Information Society and Administration. Its main functions are the following: -monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the National Cybersecurity Strategy; -identifying the challenges of managing cyber crises and suggesting adequate measures for greater efficiency; -developing programmes and action plans for activities in the field of cybersecurity to be implemented by the Body with operation cybersecurity capacities.
- **National Centre for Computer Incidents Response (MKD-CIRT).** According to Article 26 of the *Law on Electronic Communications*, the National Centre (MKD-CIRT) is set up within the Agency for Electronic Communications as a separate organisational unit, as the official national point of contact and coordination in dealing with security incidents in networks and information systems, and that will identify and provide a response to security incidents and risks.
- **Public Security Bureau (PSB)** within the MoI comprises a set of structures responsible for ensuring public order and security, including combating organised crime, financial crimes, trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking, weapons, terrorism cases and criminal intelligence and analysis.
- Concerning the fight against organised crime, the institutional framework has been under optimisation since 2018, when a major functional reform was launched. Three new bodies were established: **National Security Agency, Intelligence Agency and Military Agency.** The Action should propose a development direction for the National Coordination Centre and its capacities.

- An important vector of further development implies strengthening the national capacities for conducting financial and complex investigations and property confiscation. The PPO uses existing investigative capacities of the law enforcement agencies: **Financial Police, the Department for the Suppression of Organised and Serious Crime within MoI and Department for Criminal Police within MoI.**
- **Institute of Forensic Medicine, Criminalistics and Medical Deontology, Medical Faculty**, within the University of St. Cyril and Methodius, is the highest-ranking institution in forensic expertise in North Macedonia. As a leading authority in this area of expertise, it is constantly upgrading its capacity and knowledge in the field of forensic sciences. Besides the scientific activities of the Institute, the core role of the Institute are the forensic laboratories dealing with the examination of evidentiary material and reporting findings to a responsible requesting institution (court/police/private person).

2.3. Lessons Learned

Since 2017, the EU has allocated more than EUR 100 million to North Macedonia to foster human capital development and support vulnerable population. As the largest donor in the country, the EU has prioritised fundamental rights protection, education, employment, and social inclusion initiatives.

The IPA II bilateral pillar has provided nearly EUR 30 million in the home affairs sector. This funding encompasses various areas, including the fight against organised crime, terrorism, money laundering, border management, and robust customs controls. To address cybersecurity concerns, the EU has primarily channelled its assistance through the multi-country project *"EU Support to cybersecurity capacity building in the Western Balkans,"* initiated in 2019. This project involves collaboration with the Council of Europe, EU Member States, and the European Cybercrime Centre at Europol. Together, they aim to enhance cybersecurity capabilities in the region through coordinated efforts and knowledge exchange.

This Action is a continuation of the EU support for these sectors and is based on the following lessons:

- Strong political commitment to reform the sectors and political steer over the EU assistance shape the implementation framework and improve the effectiveness of the planned interventions. The EU accession process creates an important leverage, which can become a game changer if paired with intense, regular and inclusive of all stakeholders policy dialogue in the country. The existing sector working groups are an appropriate platform to host the sector dialogue supporting political commitment and ownership. However, they must be strengthened to effectively channel various inputs, visions, and concerns. Enhanced sector working group, in synergy with sector-focused EU assistance, has a strong potential to impact sector reforms.
- Given the horizontal and complex nature of fundamental rights, the success of any intervention is proportional to the national consensus on mainstreaming the concept of human rights across all sectors and spheres of life and to the degree to which the various stakeholders adopt the rights lens. The human rights perspective needs to be promoted early in policymaking in all sectors to enlarge the support basis and ensure critical reading of the proposed policies and measures. To support this process, assertive outreach at the central and local level has to be combined with active awareness and involvement approaches, targeting institutions, communities, CSOs, academia, the private sector and society at large. In addition, successful interventions require simultaneous work with central and local levels of decision-making and actions, reinforcing the collaboration between state, regional and municipal structures and civil society organisations to deliver better community-based social services and expand local basic and essential social services provisions.
- Including the beneficiaries from designing through implementing support measures is necessary to guarantee the results. This is particularly important when Roma people are concerned due to the significant confidence gap, which creates mistrust and reluctance to

participate of Roma people in inclusion activities. Therefore, it is essential to activate beneficiaries from the beginning, motivate them to join the support measures and empower them by giving them the right to propose, oppose and decide.

- The administrative and institutional capacity poses a challenge, as the involvement of national authorities in planning, implementing, and ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of EU assistance is crucial. However, a significant obstacle arises from the high turnover of staff resulting from the absence of a merit-based approach and retention policy. This situation can impede progress and hinder the consolidation of results. North Macedonia is currently undertaking a public administration reform to address this issue to deliver tangible outcomes. However, it is essential to implement parallel measures to mitigate the challenges. These measures should include robust capacity-building initiatives at both technical and managerial levels and fostering motivation through peer-to-peer engagement. These actions are vital to ensure ownership and commitment to the reform process.
- The coordination and cooperation between the various actors in the security area and the support from the society for the enforcement bodies are also essential factors for fighting organised crime including organised crime networks and going after criminal assets. The outreach approach to the community must be paired with joint exercises involving the relevant beneficiaries to build trust and ensure a supportive attitude.
- Organised crime is often cross-border, dynamic, well-digitalised, well-organised, and potentially infiltrating all decision-making systems. Therefore, fighting it successfully requires action not only at the national level, but also cooperation at the regional level, as well as with the EU structures. National capacities must be available to allow the countries to exchange data and information and participate in joint repressive actions against organised criminal groups. A mix of regional and national tools can be more effective.
- The fight against organised and cross-border crime is a susceptible area which requires high-level political commitment. An inclusive sector policy dialogue must support this commitment and ownership. The low effectiveness of the governance and the institutions are also significant factors contributing to the success of organised crime. Therefore, well-working strategies involve a mix of tools. Capacity building will undoubtedly help a proactive approach from law enforcement; a combination of evidence from different sources; asset seizure is often more harmful to criminal groups than imprisonment. The technology leapfrogging may considerably improve how institutions operate and communicate, improve their performance, and reduce costs and delays in treating evidence.
- The criminal-justice approach must be coupled with solid prevention and awareness-raising approaches. This implies addressing the socio-economic factors that marginalise and enlarge the social basis for organised criminal groups. Therefore, the EU must invest equally in socio-economic development, focusing on education, the labour market and creating economic perspectives.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Intervention Logic

The **Overall Objective (Impact)** of this Action is:

To improve the respect of human rights and strengthen security.

The **Specific(s) Objective(s) (Outcomes)** of this Action are:

1. *Enhanced response to gender-based and domestic violence and promotion of the legal housing rights of the Roma people.*
2. *Strengthened state response to security threats and risks posed by cybercrime, organised crime, terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism.*

These Outcomes will be achieved through the delivery of the following outputs:

Outputs linked to Outcome 1

Output 1.1 Improved protection services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence.

Output 1.2 Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation at national and local level on gender-based and domestic violence.

Output 1.3 Established detailed urban planning for Roma settlements.

Output linked to Outcome 2

Output 2.1 Strengthened performance of the police and other law enforcement agencies to investigate and address crime in line with the international standards.

Output 2.2 Introduced operational tools for strengthening cybersecurity resilience.

3.2. Indicative Activities

The Action will be implemented through the following indicative activities, inter alia:

Output 1.1 Improved protection services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence.

The Action is an extension of IPA 2022 Action “EU for Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality” (ACT-60970), which supports the establishment and initial operation of at least three shelters for victims of domestic violence and prepares them for licensing as providers of specialised social services in line with the applicable national legal framework. This IPA 2024 Action will provide additional funding for sustaining and improving the existing social services and designing and implementing new ones to ensure the full range of services are available to those in need. The expected result of the two actions will be at least three fully functional domestic violence and shelters for trafficking victims, offering immediate crisis help, round-the-clock secured housing along with psychosocial support, advice and counselling related to acute situations, along with additional services such as reintegration, counselling, mentoring, legal assistance, labour market activation, medical care. These services will be paired with solid awareness-raising and communication activities targeting local communities, institutions, health and school establishments, and media to promote the available services on gender violence issues and raise public intolerance of gender discrimination and violence.

Output 1.2 Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation at national and local level on gender-based and domestic violence.

- Establishing the legal and methodological grounds for data collection and management on gender-based and domestic violence that involves harmonising the relevant legislative act with other related laws.
- Definition of the architecture and the optimal data collection and exchange model also involves defining the roles of relevant institutions and developing business processes following data protection principles and concepts (privacy by design and default).
- Development of the business processes and technical specifications for software to support the existing IT system's register and/or interface and preparing technical specifications for the necessary equipment in relevant institutions.
- Development, testing and operating the software, including support for rectifying defects, information security and training.
- Linking databases of all relevant institutions via the Interoperability Platform of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, testing and optimisation.

Output 1.3 Established detailed urban planning for Roma settlements.

- Preparation and adoption of detailed urban plans for Roma settlements in six municipalities with a high concentration of Roma people.
- Preparation of the complete technical documentation for urbanising the selected Roma settlements in line with the adopted urban-spatial plans.

- Support for the legalisation of individual homes for Roma families through the methodology prepared and legal aid provided.
- Preparation of the future EU investments in the urbanisation of Roma settlements, accompanied with a methodology for sustainable usage of works' investments.
- Support of review and implementation of social mapping in at least 14 municipalities following the priority areas of national action plans.

Output 2.1 Strengthened performance of the police and other law enforcement agencies to investigate and address crime in line with the international standards.

The Action will transfer good practices from the EU Member States to support the fight against organised crime including trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking, counter-terrorism, and radicalisation. More specifically, it will:

- Analyse the system of cooperation between institutions involved in the fight against organised crime, terrorism and money laundering, and assess complex, serious crimes, to strengthen and, if necessary, refine the legal framework for joint investigations on potential threats involving more than one law enforcement agency, enlarge the number and scope of joint investigations and increase the transparency of joint investigations.
- Improve the investigation skills of the officers involved in criminal investigations; fight against organised crime including trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking, terrorism and money laundering; assess complex, serious crimes and promote pre-emptive preventive, strategic and tactical approaches; refine and modernise the investigative methods and techniques (interviews, digital forensic and lawful access to data and digital evidence, informants, searches, surveillance, and other special investigative techniques).
- Improve the skills and knowledge of police officers and their role in implementing preventative measures against terrorism and radicalisation.
- Enhance the cooperation with regional and international organisations in the fight against organised crime and countering terrorism and money laundering.
- Further strengthen the capacities of the National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism by providing support in implementing the new National Strategy for Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism.
- Further strengthen the capabilities of the Ministry of Interior's (MOI's) "Terrorism and Violent Extremism" Sector to combat and prevent crime, terrorism and radicalisation, as well as manage security-related incidents, risks and crises.
- Improve data collection, operational cooperation and information exchange concerning intelligence, law enforcement and justice to enhance detection, prevention and investigation of criminal offences and conducting criminal intelligence operations.
- Develop and conduct national counterterrorism and counter-hybrid threat exercises to assess the National Counter-Terrorism Action Team's functionality, proactiveness and efficiency to coordinate all the institutional agencies and non-governmental bodies in tackling national and transnational terrorism threats.
- Enhance capacities and cooperation of law enforcement personnel to address the issue of violent extremism and radicalisation in prisons and, at the same time support reintegration and resocialisation of former prisoners, with a particular focus on gender aspect.
- Revise the existing procedures and methodologies to ensure an adequate response by the criminal justice system to the needs of girls, women and other vulnerable groups in their interactions with police, investigators, legal professionals, judicial staff and others involved in the judicial process
- Improving the existing and establishing new mechanisms and tools (hardware and software) for identifying, investigating, and preventing cybercrime and cyber incidents.

- Upgrading the national capacities for identifying, investigating, and preventing cyber incidents and cybercrime. Upgrade the equipment and upscale the forensic knowledge and hybrid investigations.

Output 2.2 Introduced operational tools for strengthening cybersecurity resilience.

The Action will provide advisory and capacity-building support from EU Member States on a peer-to-peer basis that may include (the list is not exhaustive):

- Establishment and building the capacity of a National Operational Centre to coordinate all cyber activities, including active cyber prevention and effective response to cyber threats.
- Development of national procedures to manage incidents in times of peace, crisis, and state of emergency, development of communication guidelines in cyber incidents, and establishment of standards for public communication. The procedures will ensure efficient and effective intra-institutional cooperation based on clear roles and engagement. Every institution will have a pre-defined position and employ appropriate protocols and procedures for information exchange, communication, and coordination.
- Development of the methodological basis for cybersecurity prevention and reaction, including instructions and guidelines in case of cyber incidents and cyber crises.
- Establishment of cooperation mechanisms with law enforcement authorities, including exchange of information (including personal data necessary to carry out investigations) at strategic and operational level.
- Performing a national cyber risk assessment, in relevance with the ENISA risk index model.
- Improving regional and international cooperation and information sharing formats to allow for a better understanding and response to the constantly changing threat environment, participating in and strengthening collaboration with dedicated European and global CSIRT and technical communities (TF-CSIRT, FIRST) and with international cooperation networks (e.g., ENISA, Council of Europe).
- Developing technical skills of cybersecurity experts of governmental agencies and critical service providers through technical cybersecurity exercises and organising tabletop exercise (TTX) for cybersecurity-related with national experience and needs.
- Developing training tools, methodology and programmes for improving the understanding of the public administration on cybersecurity and mainstreaming cybersecurity training through the public administration training platform and developing internal safe communications habits and protocols/ disabling access to unverified websites and software across all devices the public administration is using- this to prevent the vulnerability of the system.
- Implementing domestic awareness raising and outreach campaigns on cybersecurity targeting political leaders and high-level government officials on digital literacy, enhancing the cooperation with civil society organisations and the private sector, and strengthening the cooperation with media and journalists. The activity also includes the publication of regular threat reports and insight into cybersecurity trends and developments to support the private sector and individuals in taking measures to prevent incidents. Further activities will be taken in order to secure complementarity with the IPROCEEDS project.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

The Action does not directly address environmental and climate change challenges but will support achieving the country's environmental agenda. Once completed, the activities addressing the illegal Roma housing will contribute to decreasing the pollution in the Roma settlements. Moreover, the Action strengthens the rule of law framework by enhancing the capabilities of law

enforcement services to combat criminality and safeguard citizens' security and public order. Additionally, it acknowledges the potential risks posed by cyber-attacks, which can lead to losing control over critical equipment and warning systems, harming human health and the environment. These risks encompass catastrophic spills, waste discharges, and air emissions, which may trigger fires, explosions, and the release of hazardous materials, causing significant bodily injury, property damage, environmental remediation expenses, and liability claims. As a result, this Action contributes to improving risk control, management, and prevention measures to protect the environment.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1²⁸. This implies that the Action is gender sensitive and in line with the governmental commitment to adopt the principles and approach stipulated in the *Gender Strategy of the European Union 2020-2025* and apply them in all sectoral reforms and support measures. The country has ratified the Istanbul Convention and has established the legal framework to ensure gender equality by adopting the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination. Furthermore, the Action will directly support the gender equality agenda by improving the system to address gender-based and domestic violence, focusing on women and girls from vulnerable groups living in rural areas, Roma or LGBTI.

The right to decent living conditions respond to the needs of Roma women and children who, living in squat and slums, experience increased security risks and more acute physical and mental health challenges due to a lack of services, including water, sanitation, electricity, solid waste removal, health and social care support, police protection and legal aid. The shift to regular housing for Roma will allow the realisation of a broad range of human rights for the Roma women, such as education, employment and health care, community and public participation opportunities, and protection against violence.

Research indicates that women are more often targeted by organised crime and specific types of cyber violence than men. By enhancing the country's ability to respond to cyber threats and organised crime, this Action aims to prevent violence against women. Additionally, it will propose a fresh approach to treating girls, women, and other vulnerable individuals with respect when they come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Human Rights

The Action will support the human rights agenda in the country in practice by addressing the needs of people who suffer gender-based and domestic violence and consequently experience a violation of certain human rights such as the right to life, freedom from torture and degrading treatment, freedom from discrimination and the right to safety and security. Finally, the Action addresses a critical aspect of fundamental rights such as the right to decent housing for Roma, who living in squats and slams are deprived of many rights.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this Action is labelled as D0 as the Action has no direct impact on people with disability. However, the support for the urbanisation of the Roma settlements will comply with all accessibility norms and standards. The Action will also reinforce the Rule of Law framework, which will allow the practice of the principle of non-discrimination of minorities and vulnerable groups.

Civil Society

The Action has been developed through an inclusive process involving civil society as an integral part of the established sector policy dialogue. This approach will continue to be applied in the next stage, with civil society organisations participating as Sector Working Groups (SWGs)

²⁸ Principal objective – significant objective – not targeted.

members. Civil society organisations will be crucial in implementing the Action, particularly in addressing gender-based violence and domestic violence, where community organisations will implement the measures for preventing and detecting gender-based violence. Additionally, civil society organisations will participate in promoting awareness of cybercrime.

3.4. Risks and Assumptions

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
People and the organisation	Lack of political will to continue the implementation of the reforms related to gender-based and domestic violence, Roma inclusion, and security.	M	H	Engage in continuous policy dialogue with national authorities through the Sector Working Groups, with strong ownership and leadership engaging authorities, donors and international partners, and civil society organisations.
Planning, processes and system	Weak administrative capacity, and lack of adequate number and quality staffing.	M	M	The ongoing Public Administration Reform (PAR) is expected to address the high staff turnover in all institutions by proposing a viable retention and merit-based policy and modern human resource management. As intermediate mitigation approach, technical assistance and capacity building measures, including by this Action, will be put in place.
Planning, processes and system	Insufficient coordination and cooperation among institutions and law enforcement bodies.	M	H	The Action addresses this weakness directly by enhancing the coordination among law enforcement bodies. In addition, at the policy level, an important mitigation measure is the strengthening of the Sector Working Groups channelling the coordination and policy dialogue. In addition, at

				the project level, the Steering Committee will involve the relevant stakeholders.
Planning, processes and system	Slow establishment of functional services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence	L	M	The project is a second phase Support to provide good practice models and encourage networking and peer-to-peer exchange between providers of the services to facilitate and foster their operationalisation according to the provisions of Law on Social Protection and relevant bylaws.
People and the organisation	Lack of interest of the private sector and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on activities related to the Action	M	M	Improve interaction with civil society and CSOs networks within the established Sector Working Groups and through targeted meetings.
Planning, processes and system	Lack of interest and resistance among local authorities on the matters linked to legalisations of Roma settlement.	M	M	Intense policy dialogue and strong outreach to showcase the benefits of the Action for the municipalities and the communities from improved urban-spatial planning in the Roma settlements

External Assumptions

The external assumptions encountered to have an impact on the proposed Action are:

- Stable political situation and consistent reform orientation of any new Government in support of the fundamental rights agenda and security.
- Stable progress on the EU accession path to back up the cooperation with the EU on security resilience.
- Political determination and effective decision-making procedures are maintained.
- Positive dynamics on the societal flows and improved socioeconomic conditions impacting human rights.
- The level of trust in the institutions improves.
- Relevant national strategic and regulatory frameworks are in place.
- Improving coordination and cooperation between law enforcement agencies.
- Public Administration Reform progresses well, and an adequate staff retention policy is implemented.
- Social dialogue at the sector level is efficiently working.
- Adequate coordination and cooperation mechanisms between stakeholders including with EU Member States and other donors to ensure the smooth implementation and avoid all possible overlapping of the projects.

- Relevant institutions are committed and dispose of sufficient resources to implement the project, including staff, infrastructure and mandates.

3.5. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	<i>Improved respect of human rights and strengthened security</i>	Gender Equality Index ²⁹	62 points (2015)	66 points (2027)	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)	
		Human Development Index ³⁰	0,77 (2021)	0,790 (2027)	HRD UNDP	
		Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism ³¹ (as measured by the World Bank Worldwide Governance indicators) ³²	50.47 (2020)	≥ 50 (2027)	World Bank	
		Crime rate (Crimes over population 100.000 inhabitants. Considered crimes: intentional homicide; - attempted intentional homicide; - assault; -kidnapping; -sexual violence; -rape; -robbery) ³³	38,10 (2017)	≤ 30 (2027)	Eurostat	
Outcome 1	<i>Enhanced response to gender-based and domestic violence, and promotion of the legal housing rights of the Roma people.</i>	Percentage of direct beneficiaries (women, LGBTI, trafficking victims, persons with disabilities and minorities) reintegrated in active life (in employment) (disaggregated by sex)	0 (2021)	≥ 20% (2027)	Project Final Report	Stable political situation and consistent reform orientation of any new government in support of the fundamental rights agenda.
		Percentage of urbanized Roma settlements ³⁴	0 % (2022)	60% (2027)	Regional research	
Outcome 2	<i>Strengthened state response to security threats and risks posed by cybercrime, organised crime, terrorism</i>	Level of trust in the police (EU Public Opinion) ³⁵	48% (2019)	≥ 57% (2027)	Eurobarometer	Political determination and effective decision-making procedures are maintained.
		Financial investigation rate (Proportion of person under financial investigation over persons investigated for organised crime) ³⁶	48 57/148 = 38.5% ³⁷	≥42% (2027)	Financial Police CIU	Positive dynamic on the societal flows and improved socioeconomic conditions

²⁹ <https://eige.europa.eu/north-macedonia>³⁰ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>³¹ <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports>³² <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports>³³ http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=crim_off_cat&lang=en³⁴ It is calculated dividing the number of Roma settlements with urban plan by the total number of Roma settlements.³⁵ <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/browse/all/series/4961>³⁶ Financial Police-Criminal Intelligence Unit.³⁷ Numerator: Number of people under financial investigation within DSOSC 57 (43 individuals and 14 legal entities) // Denominator: Total number of persons under investigation within DSOSC

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
	<i>radicalisation and violent extremism</i>	Financial Investigation Rate on OCC by the PPOOCC ³⁸	26/126 = 21% (2019)	≥ 37% (2027)	Financial Police	<p>impacting on the human rights.</p> <p>Social dialogue at the sector level is efficiently working.</p> <p>Stable progress on the EU accession path to back up the cooperation with the EU on security resilience</p> <p>Stable political situation and consistent reform orientation of any new government.</p> <p>The level of trust in the institutions improves</p>
		Percentage of executed confiscation sentences since 2011 for crimes related to organised crime, money laundering, abuse official duty (cumulative indicator) ³⁹	50% (till 2019)	≥ 75% (till 2027)	Agency for confiscation of assets	
		Number of Computer cybercrimes ⁴⁰	169 (2022)	≥ 120 (2027)	European Commission's Report on North Macedonia	
Output 1.1	<i>Improved protection services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence</i>	Number of supported victims of domestic violence and trafficking victims in the frame of the services supported by this Action by type of services (psycho-social assistance, legal aid, employment measures, etc.), gender and age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity and other intersectional categories	0 (2022)	At least 300 (2027)	Reports of the service providers supported by the Action	<p>Adequate coordination and cooperation mechanisms between stakeholders to ensure the smooth implementation of the projects.</p> <p>Relevant institutions are committed and dispose with the sufficient resources to implement the project, in including staff, infrastructure and mandates</p>
Output 1.2	<i>Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation at national and local level on gender-based and -domestic violence</i>	Number of users of the integrated systems for data collection on Gender Based Violence	0 (2022)	>60 (2027)	MLSP Project Final Report	

³⁸ Financial Police³⁹ Report of the Agency for confiscation of Assets⁴⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement-system/files/2021-10/North-Macedonia-Report-2021.pdf>

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Output 1.3	<i>Established detailed urban planning for Roma settlements</i>	Number of new Roma settlements integrated in urban plans at municipal levels	0 (2022)	≥ 3 (2027) ⁴¹	Project Final Report	
		Number of legalised houses of Roma families in selected municipalities	0 (2022)	≥ 200 (2027) ⁴²	Project Final Report	
Output 2.1	<i>Strengthened performance of the police and other law enforcement agencies to investigate and address crime in line with the international standards</i>	Number of additional cooperation protocols with regional and international organisations in the fight against organised crime related to the Internet prepared and adopted	0 (2022)	≥ 3 (2027)	Project Final Report	<p>Relevant national strategic and regulatory frameworks in place.</p> <p>Improving coordination and cooperation between law enforcing agencies.</p> <p>Public administration reform progresses well, and adequate staff retention policy is put in place.</p> <p>Interest on behalf of the EU Member states to support the reforms in the sector.</p>
		Number of national cooperation protocols on investigations against organised crime prepared and adopted	0 (2022)	≥ 3 (2027)	Project Final Report	
		Number of people trained on modern investigation techniques and methods including forensic skills for criminal investigations	0 (2022)	≥ 50 (2027)	Project Final Report	
		Number of protocols on conducting investigations against perpetrators of crimes related to youths and women prepared and adopted	0 (2022)	≥ 2 (2027)	Project Final Report	
		Number of law enforcement agents trained on modern counter terrorism and hybrid investigations skills, with pre-emptive, preventive, strategic and tactical approaches	0 (2022)	≥ 30 (2027)	Project Final Report	
		Number of tabletop exercises (TTX) for terrorism (cumulative indicator)	0 (2022)	≥ 2 (2027)	Project Final Report	

⁴¹ Roma settlements will be selected based on housing feasibility study prepared for assessment of social housing in Roma communities. So far, housing feasibility study have been prepared for municipalities of Kumanovo and Stip (<https://www.ree.int/romaintegration2020/download/docs/Housing%20Feasibility%20Study%20for%20Roma%20settlements%20in%20the%20cities%20Stip%20and%20Kumanovo.pdf/786c89469a5d951173887150c7dea12e.pdf>), in which certain percentage of Roma population live. In total 6 settlements had been encompassed with the studies (3 settlements per each municipality). The housing feasibility study was prepared with the support of RCC – Roma Integration 2020. It is expected housing feasibility studies to be prepared for Roma settlements in other municipalities in forthcoming period.

⁴² Number of legalized houses of Roma families will be encompassed in selected municipalities in which urban planning will be done previously.

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
		Number of terrorists whose assets are frozen	0 (2022)	≥ 5 (2027)	Project Final Report	
Output 2.2	<i>Introduced operational tools for strengthening cybersecurity resilience</i>	Number of national procedures for managing cyber incidents in times of peace, crisis, and state of emergency prepared and adopted	0 (2022)	1 (2027)	Project Final Report	
		Number of National Operation Centres established and operational	0 (2022)	1 (2027)	Project Final Report	
		Number of manuals for handling cases of cyber threats and attacks prepared and adopted	0 (2022)	1 (2027)	Project Final Report	
		Number of people (public administration) trained on cybersecurity (cumulative indicator)	0 (2022)	≥ 100 (2027)	Project Final Report	
		Number of tabletop exercises (TTX) for cybersecurity related with national experience and needs (cumulative indicator)	0 (2022)	≥ 2 (2027)	Project Final Report	
		Number of public awareness events organised on cybersecurity	0 (2022)	≥ 2 (2027)	Project Final Report	

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing Agreement

In order to implement this Action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with North Macedonia.

4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this Action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 72 months from the date of conclusion of the financing agreement.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3. Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁴³.

⁴³ [EU Sanctions Map](#). Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

4.3.1. Direct Management (Grants)

4.3.1.1. Grants

Call for proposals "EU against Gender Based Violence" II

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The grants foreseen to be awarded under the call for proposals mentioned will contribute to achieving the Output 1.1. *Improved protection services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence.*

(b) Type of applicants targeted

Applicants must be legal entities, civil society organisations, public bodies, or international organisations established in North Macedonia and licenced to implement social services.

4.3.1.2 Twinning Grants

Twining Call for proposals "Enhancing Performance of Police, Law Enforcement, and Cybersecurity"

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The twinning grant foreseen is aimed at contributing to achievement of the Output 2.1 "*Strengthened performance of the police and other law enforcement agencies to investigate and address crime in line with the international standards*", and Output 2.2 "*Introduced operational tools for strengthening cybersecurity resilience*".

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The applicants must be EU Member State administrations or mandated bodies.

4.3.2. Direct Management (Procurement)

Procurement will contribute to achieving the following outputs:

- 1.2. Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation at the national and local level on gender-based and domestic violence*
- 1.3. Established detailed urban planning for Roma settlements*
- 2.2. Introduced operational tools for strengthening cybersecurity resilience*

4.3.3. Indirect Management with a pillar-assessed entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with a pillar assessed entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- Financial and administrative capacity
 - Existing country office in North Macedonia or regional office in the Western Balkans with sufficient operational capacities to allow effective and timely implementation of the project(s)/assignment(s) entrusted to the entity under this action.
 - Stable and sufficient financial resources.
- Technical capacity
 - Previous experience in the sector/subject areas addressed by the project(s)/assignment(s) to be entrusted to the entity under this action.
 - Previous experience in implementing projects/assignments similar to the one(s) entrusted to the entity under this action, preferably with EU financing.

- Sufficient staff timely available with knowledge and experience in the areas addressed by the project(s)/assignment(s) to be entrusted to the entity under this action.

4.3.4. Changes from indirect to direct management (and vice versa) mode due to exceptional circumstances

If the implementation modality under direct management, as defined in section 4.3.1. or 4.3.2, cannot be implemented due to circumstances beyond the control of the Commission, the modality of implementation by indirect management with a pillar-assessed entity would be used according to section 4.3.3.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third- party contribution, in currency identified
Methods of implementation, cf section 4.3		
Outcome 1: Enhanced response to gender-based violence and domestic violence and promotion of the legal housing rights of Roma people, composed of:	6 500 000	300 000
Grants (direct management) – cf. section.3.1	3 000 000	300 000
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.2	3 500 000	N.A.
Outcome 2: Strengthened state response to security threats and risks posed by cybercrime, organised crime, terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism, composed of:	5 000 000	200 000
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	4 000 000	N.A.
Procurement (direct management), cf. section 4.3.2	1 000 000	200 000
Grants - total envelope under section 4.3.1	7 000 000	300 000
Procurement - total envelope under section 4.3.2	4 500 000	200 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2	Will be covered by another Decision	N.A.

Audit/Expenditure verification- cf. section 5.3	Will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy – cf. section 6	Will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Contingencies	0	N.A.
Totals	11 500 000	500 000

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The Delegation of the European Union (EUD) to North Macedonia is in charge of implementing the Action. It will collaborate with the NIPAC Office within the Secretariat for European Affairs, the line ministries, and all stakeholders and implementing partners.

At the policy level, the implementing partners will be accountable to the relevant Sector Working Groups (Education, Employment and Social Policy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights, and Home Affairs and Security), the IPA Monitoring Committee and the respective Sector Monitoring Committee/s.

At the contract level, the implementation arrangements will be discussed through the project Steering Committees having advisory functions and composed of EUD, the relevant national authorities and all relevant implementing partners.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

4.7. Pre-conditions

N.A.

5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its Outputs and contribution to the achievement of its Outcomes, and if possible at the time of reporting, contribution to the achievement of its Impacts, as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner's strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support). The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Arrangements for monitoring and reporting, including roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring: The implementation of the Action will be monitored at the sector level through the established 2020 Performance Assessment Framework (PAF), which includes outcome and impact indicators, targets and baseline data. PAF has been established as a web-based application (backed up by a government decision on responsibilities and deadlines), allowing

regular electronic data input, processing, and analytics. The PAF data will be used in the Sector Working Groups on Education, Employment and Social Policy, Justice and Fundamental Rights, and Home Affairs and Security which is also the inclusive platform for all stakeholders to monitor the implementation of the sector priorities. Data about each project and contract implementation will be collected based on official reports, acceptance certificates or equivalent documents. The competent actors (e.g. MLSP, MoJ and MoI) are expected to produce timely and meaningful data to monitor the results and impact of the Action. The Sector Working Groups are the available platform to ensure synergies between interventions and coordinate donor activities. They embed the IPA programming but go far beyond the EU funds debate. The SWGs are the platform to voice the opinion and coordinate the work of various donors, relevant state institutions and civil society, including the implementation of the proposed Action.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this Action or its components via independent consultants. It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision).

The Commission shall form a Reference Group (RG) composed by representatives from the main stakeholders at both EU and national (representatives from the government, from civil society organisations (private sector, NGOs, etc.), etc.) levels. If deemed necessary, other donors will be invited to join. The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 2 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation exercise and missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination⁴⁴. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

5.3. Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

All entities implementing EU-funded external actions have the contractual obligation to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. To that end they must comply with the instructions given in the 2022 guidance document *Communicating and raising EU visibility: Guidance for external actions* (or any successor document).

This obligation will apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, the partner country, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU Member States. In each case, a reference to the relevant contractual obligations must be included in the respective financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and contribution agreements.

⁴⁴ See best practice of evaluation dissemination

For the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the EU and its contribution to this action, the Commission may sign or enter into joint declarations or statements, as part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union. Visibility and communication measures should also promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds. Effectiveness of communication activities on awareness about the action and its objectives as well as on EU funding of the action should be measured. Implementing partners shall keep the Commission and the EU Delegation fully informed of the planning and implementation of specific visibility and communication activities before the implementation. Implementing partners will ensure adequate visibility of EU financing and will report on visibility and communication actions as well as the results of the overall action to the relevant monitoring committees.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

The Action holds significant potential for sustainability across various levels, encompassing institutional, regulatory, and financial aspects. This potential is influenced by several factors, including policy enhancements, institutional and methodological improvements, increased administrative capacity, investment in social infrastructure, and raised public awareness.

As a result of the Action, it is anticipated that new facilities, particularly shelters for victims of violence and trafficking in human beings, will be established. The institutions and organisations benefiting from this initiative are responsible for ensuring the proper maintenance of all infrastructure provided through the Action. These facilities must be kept in good condition, ready to serve the target groups, and subject to regular maintenance and upgrades. Furthermore, urbanisation plans for the Roma settlements will create the necessary prerequisites for directing investments from the EU, national entities, and other donors toward the urbanisation of the Roma quarters significantly improving living conditions.

The Action is expected to generate policy improvements related to violence prevention and protection. The established data on gendered-based violence will guide future policy-making endeavours and foster inter-institutional coordination over the mid-term perspective. Additionally, inclusive political dialogue is another vital component of sustainability, which is anticipated to support the implementation of coherent sectoral policies. Moreover, through outreach and awareness-raising activities, the Action will contribute to cultivating a culture of respect, tolerance, and non-violence while promoting positive behavioural norms.

The cornerstone of sustainability lies in the complete ownership of the reform process in the home affair sector, as well as the fight against organised crime and terrorism by the institutions of North Macedonia. This ownership is based on coherent strategies that align with the EU *acquis* and adhere to good international practices. The sustainability of the Action is assured through enhanced capacities of national authorities in combating cybercrime, organised crime, and terrorism. This entails improving the operational and legal framework for combating crime by establishing or amending procedures, rules, and strategic documents. Additionally, defining mid-term anti-crime activities and routines in the country and providing training to officers and staff involved in crime-fighting will enable the adoption of working methods in line with EU standards. These efforts will allow law enforcement bodies to participate in joint operations with the EU, the US, and other peers, thereby contributing to the country's integration into international anti-crime systems.

Appendix 1: IDENTIFICATION OF THE PRIMARY INTERVENTION LEVEL FOR REPORTING IN OPSYS

A Primary intervention⁴⁵ (project/programme) is a coherent set of results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

- ✓ Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);
- ✓ Articulating Actions and/or Contracts according to an expected common chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure a more efficient and aggregated monitoring and reporting of performance;
- ✓ Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

The present Action identifies as

Action level (i.e. Budget support, Blending)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
Group of actions level (i.e: i) top-up cases, ii) second, third, etc. phases of a programme)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of actions	Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSYS#): N/A
Contract level (i.e. Grants, Contribution Agreements, any case in which foreseen individual legal commitments identified in the budget will have different log frames, even if part of the same Action Document)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	N/A
Group of contracts level (i.e: i) series of programme estimates, ii) cases in which an Action Document foresees many foreseen individual legal commitments (for instance four contracts and one of them being a Technical Assistance) and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other, iii) follow up contracts that share the same log frame of the original contract)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of contracts	N/A

⁴⁵ For the purpose of consistency between terms in OPSYS, DG INTPA, DG NEAR and FPI have harmonised 5 key terms, including 'Action' and 'Intervention' where an 'Action' is the content (or part of the content) of a Commission financing Decision and 'Intervention' is a coherent set of activities and results which constitutes an effective level for the operational follow-up by the EC of its operations on the ground. See more on the concept of intervention [\[to access the link an EU Login is needed\]](#).

