



**Needs assessment of
local mechanisms for
protection against
discrimination and
access to justice in the
municipalities of:**

**Bitola, Kumanovo, Strumica,
Tetovo and Shtip**

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Authors:

Slavcho Dimitrov

Natasha Boshkova

Editors:

Dragana Drndarevska

Drashko Kostovski

Proofreading:

Boban Karapejovski

Translated in Albanian by:

Gramoz Shabani

Translated in English by:

Igor Raiden

Cover page illustration:

Igor Delov

Editorial design:

Monika Mladenovska - Delova

Igor Delov

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Summary

The objective of this assessment is to provide data on the knowledge, attitudes, capacities, practices and needs of the representatives of local mechanisms for gender equality and non-discrimination in five cities. Within the assessment, special emphasis is placed on their knowledge and attitudes toward gender equality and the situation of LGBT people. The assessment should also depict the manner of providing free legal aid in cases of discrimination in these five cities, which is the subject-matter of the analysis. The criteria for selection of the cities included in this assessment was the existence of regional offices in the municipality under analysis, varying geographical scope, as well as the ethnic composition of the population within these municipalities, i.e. the municipalities covered have a population comprising various ethnic communities.

In order to achieve the goal of the assessment, the researchers developed a list of de jure and de facto indicators (additionally divided into input, output and process indicators), based on which there is an insight into the situation of gender equality and non-discrimination, particularly with focus on sexual orientation and gender identity. The methodological tools of the research involved: a) desktop research – collecting secondary sources of information, b) interviews – field research for collecting primary data and c) systemic and interpretational analysis, and preparation of a final report with conclusions and recommendations for next steps, which would lead to the achievement of the desired situation in the functioning and efficiency of local mechanisms for protection against discrimination. Within the research, there were structured and in-depth interviews with the Coordinator for equal opportunities in the units of the local government, a representative from the regional office of the Ministry of Justice, and the deputies of the Ombudsmen, in each of the five selected cities for this research (Shtip, Bitola, Strumica, Tetovo and Kumanovo). A total of 14 interviews were conducted: 3 interviews with the Coordinator for equal opportunities in the municipalities of Shtip, Kumanovo and Strumica, 5 interviews with the deputies of the Ombudsmen in all municipalities involved in the research, and 5 interviews with the representatives of the regional office of the Ministry of Justice in all 5 municipalities. The Coordinator in the municipality of Bitola answered a portion of the questions in written form as a response to a request for access to information. In the municipality of Tetovo, no interview was conducted with the Coordinator, instead, another person was appointed by the municipality to be interviewed.

The main findings of the research point to a **need for amendments of the laws and policies for equal opportunities and protection against discrimination on national level**. Namely, defining the scope of protection and equality in the Law for equal opportunities of women and men is restrictively regulated and defined exclusively based on the category of sex, while the versatile meanings and range of the category of gender, including the structural and political intersectionality of gender with other axes of societal stratification and inequality are completely excluded. The Law entirely excludes from protection women with homosexual or bisexual orientation, as well as transgender women, or people. This narrowed understanding of gender and gender equality also reflects on the specific policies, activities, measures and mechanisms for protection against discrimination and promotion of gender equality.

Furthermore, the Law on free legal aid narrowly determines the criteria on who may obtain the right to free legal aid, and has a closed list of legal matters for which free legal aid may be provided, while discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes are not explicitly included in the list of legal matters for which this type of aid may be provided. This gap creates confusion even between the representatives in the regional offices of the Ministry of Justice, who, according to their interview statements, did not know whether discrimination or hate speech are among the legal matters for which free legal aid may be provided.

A significant portion of **national strategies and action plans** in the field of gender equality and non-discrimination do not include specific activities for strengthening local mechanisms for equal opportunities and protection against discrimination, nor do they involve local government units as institutions responsible for the implementation of the planned activities. The National Strategy for equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, age, mental disability and sex for the period 2012-2015 was created on the basis of limiting and excluding provisions in regard to the grounds for discrimination.

The assessment of the **situation on local level** points to a lack of transparency in the publication of the Statutes, Rules of procedure of the Municipal Council, and other bylaws, as well as policies for equal opportunities and non-discrimination on the municipalities' websites.

Only two of the involved municipalities have a separately regulated and specified position with competences and scope for the position of Coordinator for equal

opportunities, while the other municipalities, these competences are regulated as additional responsibilities which are an integral part of other positions. This structure of the Local government units does not allow the officers given the role of Coordinators for equal opportunities to fully dedicate themselves to their tasks and perform the activities for improving the situation with equal opportunities and protection against discrimination.

Despite the fact that most of the municipalities have developed action plans, annual programmes or strategies for gender equality and non-discrimination, none of them focuses on discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity as a priority area, nor do they plan activities in the direction of preventing discrimination on these specific grounds.

All representatives of the local mechanisms for protection against discrimination possess **adequate knowledge** on the concepts of gender equality and inclusion of the gender perspective in the mainstream. However, it is important to emphasize the evident presence of a narrow understanding of gender equality. With the exception of the Coordinator for equal opportunities, the representatives of the local mechanisms for protection against discrimination show a limited understanding of the concepts of sex and gender. The greatest need for enhancement of the knowledge on facts and data related to LGBTI people and their experiences have the representatives of the regional offices of the Ministry of Justice who are authorized to provide free legal aid, while most of the representatives of the local mechanisms have no knowledge whatsoever of the challenges faced by transgender people in the realization of their rights and everyday life. With the exception of a small portion of Coordinators and deputies of the Ombudsmen, the representatives of local mechanisms have a need for improving their knowledge of the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination, as well as national and international legislation referring to the protection of rights and non-discrimination of LGBT people.

The Coordinator and deputies of the Ombudsmen show a medium to high level of **sensibility and tolerance** toward homosexual people, while the representatives of the local offices of the Ministry of Justice show a low to medium level of tolerance. All representatives of local mechanisms have an evident low tolerance and sensibility when it comes to transgender people.

In regard to the **factual establishment and functioning of the local mechanisms for protection against discrimination**, several problems have been identified. The municipalities show low interest in clearly defining the competences, tasks and obligations of the members of the Commission for equal opportunities of women and men (CEOWM) and the Coordinator for equal opportunities. Furthermore, there is a total lack of cooperation and commencing joint initiatives between the Coordinator and the CEOWM in some municipalities, while in other there is an overlap or lack of separation of competences and activities of the Coordinator and the CEOWM.

The initiatives for promotion of the principles of non-discrimination, as well as for protection against discrimination, which the Coordinators are obliged to take are barely noticeable, few in number, completely absent in some of the municipalities, and in municipalities where they exist, they often include one-time activities. None of the Coordinators in all municipalities involved have taken an initiative related to the rights of LGBT people.

Moreover, none of the interviewed deputies of the Ombudsmen have initiated a procedure on their own initiative, in relation to discrimination on the grounds of sex/gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. There is a total lack of requests or approvals of free legal aid in cases of discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Coordinators have the best practice of **cooperation with civil associations** working in the field of gender equality and human rights, and there are relatively good practices of cooperation between civil associations and deputies of the Ombudsmen. The cooperation of local offices of the Ministry of Justice with the civil organizations is reduced exclusively to cooperation with associations authorized to provide free legal aid, in accordance with the Law on free legal aid. With the exception of two deputies of the Ombudsmen, none of the other local mechanisms have cooperated with civil organizations working with the protection and promotion of the rights of LGBT people.

What is worrying is the **inadequate coordination between different local mechanisms** for protection against discrimination, which is the source of the lack of response to situations, which also deepens discrimination.

The local mechanisms, as well as the respective representatives on national level have developed no mechanisms and methodologies for monitoring the situation related to equal opportunities and non-discrimination on local level.

The key identified **needs and challenges in the work of local mechanisms for protection against discrimination** in the implementation of activities on local level, which refer to the promotion of equality, non-discrimination in general, as well as on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, include the following: limited and insufficient financial resources, insufficient technical resources, poor staff readiness for processing cases of discrimination, as well as the general atmosphere of homophobia in the general public, as well as the insufficient information that citizens have in regard to anti-discrimination mechanisms.

Based on the main findings and identified problems, within the assessment there are also specific recommendations offered to improve the situation and overcome the basic obstacles and flaws in the capacities, functionality and efficiency of local mechanisms for protection against discrimination. The recommendations are addressed by the Ministry of labor and social policy, the Ministry of Justice and the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, in the direction of amendments, supplementations and adoption of amendments in the Law on equal opportunities of women and men and the Law on free legal aid. Within the recommendations, special emphasis is placed on the need for improvements of national policies and strategies for prevention and protection against discrimination and gender equality, which is within the scope of the Ministry of labor and social policy. Most of the recommendations refer to the Local government units, proposing specific steps for improving transparency and accountability, regulation and determining the competences of the Coordinator and the CEOWM, planning and budgeting of initiatives and activities in the area of discrimination (and specifically discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity), and continuous improvement of capacities of the Coordinator for equal opportunities, deputies of the Ombudsmen and the representatives of the Ministry of Justice. The recommendations specifically point out the need for the local mechanisms for protection against discrimination (CEOWM, the Coordinator and Ombudsmen) and access to justice of citizens locally (representatives of the regional offices of the Ministry of justice) to establish and develop cooperation due to a comprehensive monitoring of the

situation of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, actively involving into and supporting the work of civil associations working in the area, including LGBT organizations. In line with the major findings, it is recommended that the Ombudsman and the Ministry of justice develop a modern methodology for recording, processing and presentation of results of work in the field of discrimination and in regard to the legal aid which was requested / provided. And finally, the recommendations refer also to local LGBT rights associations, i.e. the need for them to increase their communication with local anti-discrimination mechanisms, due to initializing and improving their cooperation.

2.

Conclusions

Laws and policies for equal opportunities and protection against discrimination on national level

Even despite the fact that the basic goal of the Law on equal opportunities of women and men is achieving gender equality and including the gender perspective in the mainstream and policies, the definition of the scope of protection and equality in the Law is restrictively regulated and defined based on the category of sex. The versatile meanings and range of the category of gender, including the structural and political intersectionality of gender with other axes of societal stratification and inequality, and the subsequent understanding of the concept of gender equality, which derives from this boxing of gender as is, are reduced to the biological category of sex. Consequently, this understanding is reflected onto specific policies, activities, measures and mechanisms for protection against discrimination and promotion of gender equality, which is also evident in the fact that the Law entirely excludes from protection those women who have homosexual or bisexual orientation, as well as transgender women, or people.

The Law on free legal aid narrowly stipulates the criteria for eligibility for free legal aid, therefore in practice only a small number of citizens exercise their right to free legal aid. Moreover, the closed list of legal matters for which free legal aid may be provided, prevents people's unobstructed path to justice. Protection against discrimination is not an explicitly listed legal matter for which citizens may receive free legal aid. A portion of the legal matters for which the Law does offer legal aid, such as domestic violence, labor relations or victims of punishable crimes, open the possibility for a broader representation, which would include discrimination as a legal matter eligible for offering free legal aid, but this implicit inclusion of discrimination opens the possibility for arbitrary and inconsistent decision-making in practice. In addition, this gap creates confusion even between the representatives in the regional offices of the Ministry of Justice, who, according to their interview statements, did not know whether discrimination or hate speech are among the legal matters for which free legal aid may be provided.

A significant portion of national strategies and action plans in the field of gender equality and non-discrimination, apart from general items covering the need for inclusion of the gender perspective both locally and nationally, do not stipulate specific activities for strengthening local mechanisms for equal opportunities and protection against discrimination. Furthermore, the local government units are not identified as institutions responsible for implementing the planned activities.

There are evident limiting and excluding provisions in regard to grounds of discrimination, based on which the National Strategy for equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, age, mental disability and sex for the period 2012-2015 was created. It is unclear due to which criteria the entity who proposed the strategy only placed the focus on a few grounds, when the 2011 Report of the Commission for protection against discrimination points to a general problem in regard to discrimination. The Commission processes numerous complaints, which, apart from ethnicity, also include health status, affiliation with a marginalized group and personal or social status as grounds in 2012, while in 2013 there is an increased number of complaints on the grounds of political affiliation and other grounds from the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination.

Policies for equal opportunities and protection against discrimination on local level

The main challenge in the analysis of the local documents and policies of the selected municipalities is the lack of transparency in the publication of the Statutes, Rules of procedure of the Municipal Council, and other bylaws, as well as policies for equal opportunities and non-discrimination on the municipalities' websites.

Only two of the municipalities within the assessment have a regulated and specified position with competences and scope as the position of Coordinator for equal opportunities. Other municipalities have this position regulated as additional obligations of other established positions. Even those Coordinators whose position is separately regulated with the systematization in the local government units, apart from their scope of work as Coordinators, they also perform a series of other obligations within the municipality. This structure within the municipalities does not allow the officers appointed Coordinators to fully dedicate themselves to their tasks and implement the activities for promotion of equal opportunities and protection against discrimination on local level, and this problem was also accentuated by most of the interviewed Coordinators during this assessment.

None of the analyzed action plans, strategies and annual programmes of these municipalities include discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity as a priority area, nor have they planned activities in the direction of prevention and protection against discrimination on these grounds.

Even despite the fact that action plans and strategies declaratively include a plan for monitoring and evaluation, there is a lack of accountability, public availability and evaluation on already implemented, i.e. completed action plans, strategies and programmes. Apart from the reports that the Coordinator for equal opportunities submits to the Ministry of labor and social policy, there are no other analyses and assessments, available to the interested public, made on the basis of measurable and specific indicators.

Comprehensive understanding of the concept of gender equality and practices of gender perspective in the mainstream by responsible persons (for gender equality and protection against discrimination)

All representatives of the local mechanisms for protection against discrimination possess adequate knowledge on the concepts of gender equality and inclusion of the gender perspective in the mainstream. However, it is important to point out that there is a narrow understanding of gender equality, evident in the areas in which gender inequality is identified. With the exception of gender stereotypes referring to the societal role of the woman as a housewife, there is an obvious fixation and reduction of the gender transformation, exclusively in the institution of the family, and partially in the labor market, i.e. in the selection and gender-wise distribution of professions (female and male). The domains of the body, sexuality, affective life, the multitude of societal roles and gender prerogatives constitutive to the understanding of gender and gender equality are absent within the understanding of gender equality and the transformation as a condition for the achievement thereof. There is also a lack of understanding on the structural and political intersectionality of understanding gender equality, and this gap within the knowledge structures is evident in the policies created by the actors locally, i.e. the lack of women, which are marginalized as a result of other parameters and societal statuses.

The Coordinators show the highest degree of knowledge on the difference between the categories of sex and gender, while the deputies of the Ombudsmen and the representatives of the regional offices of the Ministry of justice show a lack of knowledge or limited understanding in regard to the differences between the categories of sex and gender.

All interviewed representatives of the local anti-discrimination mechanisms are placing their understanding of gender equality, of sex and gender, in the binary framework of two sexes and two genders, having no knowledge

whatsoever, or not including intersex and transgender people in their concepts of gender equality.

Knowledge on the contemporary and acknowledged scientific facts on homosexuality and transgenderism, and awareness of the situation with human rights of LGBT people

The Coordinators and deputies of the Ombudsmen possess adequate knowledge on the facts and data regarding LGBT people. The representatives of the regional offices of the Ministry of Justice, authorized to provide free legal aid have the greatest need for improvement of knowledge on facts and data regarding LGBT people and their experiences.

More than half of all interviewed representatives of local anti-discrimination mechanisms have no knowledge whatsoever on the challenges faced by transgender people in the attempts to exercise their rights and their everyday life.

The representatives of the regional offices of the Ministry of justice, which are competent to provide free legal aid, have the greatest need for improvement of knowledge in regard to this Law and the organs competent to provide protection and process cases.

Knowledge on the relevant legal regulations and existing mechanisms for protection against discrimination in Macedonia

The Coordinators possess adequate knowledge on the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination; half of the Coordinators have detailed knowledge, while the remainder have partial or low knowledge on this Law. Most of the interviewed Coordinators have limited knowledge of their competences and the competences of the CEOWM in the field of non-discrimination.

The deputies of the Ombudsmen show adequate knowledge of the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination and the organs competent to provide protection against discrimination, and they have full knowledge of their own competences for processing cases of discrimination in line with the Law.

The representatives of the regional offices of the Ministry of justice, which are competent to provide free legal aid, have the greatest need for improvement of knowledge in regard to this Law and the organs competent to provide protection and process cases.

Of all interviewed representatives of the local mechanisms for prevention and protection against discrimination, only four were familiarized with a law regulating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, pointing to the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination.

Degree of sensibility and tolerance toward sexual and gender minorities

The Coordinators show a low level of social distance toward homosexuals, i.e. they show a medium to high degree of tolerance. A portion of the Coordinators show exceptions of this low level of social distance in hypothetical cases when a homosexual person would hold political office or would be President of the country.

The deputies of the Ombudsmen, with no exceptions, show a low social distance, while the representatives of the regional offices of the Ministry of justice show the highest degree of social distance toward homosexuals in various hypothetical situations, i.e. medium to high social distance.

The results on the social distance scale significantly vary among all representatives of local mechanisms when it comes to hypothetical situations and roles taken by a transgender person, i.e. on average, from all representatives of local mechanisms for protection against discrimination, the level of social distance is medium to high.

Most of the interviewees believe that general social changes, increased media presence and representation of homosexuals, as well as the greater availability of information which are breaking down stereotypes and stigmatizing definitions all have a positive influence for changing their attitudes toward the LGBT population.

Factual establishment and functioning of the mechanisms for protection against discrimination on local level

The Statutes of the involved local government units contain less information on the competences of the CEOWM than given in the Law on equal opportunities of women and men. There is a similar response by the municipalities when it comes to regulating the work of the Coordinator for equal opportunities. This shows that the municipalities do not have great interest in clearly determining the competences, tasks and obligations of the members of the CEOWM.

In some of the municipalities there is hardly any cooperation or joint initiatives between the Coordinator and the CEOWM. It was also pointed out that some of the CEOWMs are almost entirely passive, which moves most of the effort and responsibility for planning, starting and implementing initiatives and activities in the field of equal opportunities and non-discrimination to the Coordinator for equal opportunities.

The initiatives for promoting the principles of non-discrimination, as well as of protection against discrimination which the Coordinators are competent to implement are almost invisible, few in number, entirely non-existent in some of the municipalities, and in municipalities where they exist, they most frequently comprise one-time trainings.

None of the Coordinators from all involved municipalities have had an initiative related to the rights of LGBT people. None of the municipalities have implemented activities directed toward equal opportunities and protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, despite the fact that the interviewed Coordinators show awareness on the issues and discrimination of LGBT people.

Also, none of the interviewed deputies of the Ombudsmen have personally initiated a procedure regarding discrimination on the grounds of sex/gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Available data from previous analyses of the implementation of the Law on free legal aid and the information collected during the interviews show the total lack of requests or approvals of free legal aid in cases of discrimination, including on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. The exception in this practice is the large number of requests in cases of domestic violence. But even despite domestic violence being based on discrimination on the grounds of sex/gender, these requests/cases are not explicitly recorded as cases of discrimination.

The practice so far shows good cooperation between the Coordinator and civil associations, in particular with organizations working in the field of gender equality and the fight against domestic violence. However, none of the Coordinators have so far collaborated with an association working to promote the rights of LGBT people, and very few of them are familiarized with these organizations.

The cooperation between the deputies of the Ombudsmen with the associations is at a moderately low level. Apart from one of the deputies of the Ombudsmen, who responded that they have had no cooperation with civil associations, the other deputies stated there was a weak, discontinuous or one-time cooperation with civil associations. Two deputies gave positive examples of cooperation with civil association working to protect and promote the rights of LGBT people, while the other deputies have not established cooperation with these associations.

The cooperation of local offices of the Ministry of Justice with the civil organizations is reduced exclusively to cooperation with associations authorized to provide free legal aid. The practice so far shows a total lack of cooperation with civil association working to protect and promote the rights of LGBT people, and almost none of the interviewees was familiarized with these organizations, their work and the issues they face.

The regional offices of the Ombudsman are completely excluded from any communication with Coordinators or CEOWM, which is an obstacle when coordinating local policies and strategies. Moreover, none of the regional offices of the Ministry of justice have initiated or established cooperation with local Coordinators, nor have they familiarized themselves with the Coordinators' competences and work. The cooperation with other institutions on local level is reduced only to communication necessary for collecting the required documentation for completing the received requests for free legal aid and their referral to the Ministry of Justice. Research in several municipalities, some of which

are also part of this assessment, show a high level of stigma and discrimination toward LGBT people, bullying in educational institutions, discriminatory acts by relevant institutions in regard to the access to goods and services¹. The inadequate coordination between institutions does not provide an appropriate response to the situation, which in turn deepens discrimination.

The interviews conducted and the overview of practice of the Ombudsmen so far, points to the lack of a developed methodology, which would provide insight and collect data on the exact number of complaints in regard to discrimination, number of complaints processed, and disaggregation of this data by different grounds of discrimination and by local government unit in which the complaint was filed.

There is also a lack of a developed methodology and record keeping system within the Ministry of justice, in regard to legal aid requested / provided. The outcome of this oversight is the lack of statistical data from the regional departments of the Ministry of justice, in terms of the number and identity of citizens which requested legal aid, and for which legal matters it was provided.

The practice of the deputies so far shows a significant level of undertaken activities for promotion of the work and competences of the deputies on local level, such as their media presentation and communication with citizens, distribution of informative materials and brochures, transparency in the presentation of their reports and current situations, etc.

One of the key issues in the practice of the regional office of the Ministry of justice is the prohibition of the possibility of advertising and promotion of the services and competences of the regional offices and associations authorized to offer free legal aid. These limitations are a significant obstacle for the promotion of competences and availability of the Ministry's regional offices.

¹ Coalition Sexual and health rights of marginalized communities. Analysis of the mechanisms for protection against discrimination of marginalized communities on local level: Municipality of Bitola, Strumica and Centar, 2015. Available here: http://www.merc.org.mk/Files/Write/Documents/01243/mk/Analiza_Koalicija-za-seks..pdf.

Needs and challenges in the work of local mechanisms for protection against discrimination

A key issue identified by the Coordinators in relation to the implementation of several local activities referring to the promotion of equality, non-discrimination in general, as well as including the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, are the low financial resources available in the local government units, which are insufficient to provide a full engagement and special dedication by the Coordinators.

The deputies made a similar remark, pointing to financial independence as necessary for the complete and functional implementation of the offices' tasks.

Other problems identified by some of the deputies are: the closeness of other state bodies on local level, the lack of processing of decisions by the Ombudsman by the institutions which have violated the citizens' rights, and the lack of awareness by citizens in regard to the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination and the available mechanisms for protection against discrimination.

The greatest challenge faced by the representatives of the regional office, generally in their everyday work, is the lack of basic technical resources in their everyday operation. The representatives also stated that another challenge is the insufficient readiness of the staff in regard to recognizing and processing cases of discrimination, particularly in the context of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

3.

**Recommendations for capacity building
of mechanisms for protection against
discrimination and access to justice on
local level**

- + The Ministry of labor and social policy should propose, and the Parliament should adopt the text of the Law on equal opportunities of women and men, which shall contain an alignment of objectives to be achieved, i.e. inclusion of gender, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation as grounds for eliminating discrimination and establishing equal opportunities between women and men;
- + The Ministry of labor should propose, and the Parliament should adopt a supplementation to the Law on equal opportunities of women and men in the part of competences of the local machinery for gender equality for protection against discrimination in line with the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination;
- + The Ministry of labor should propose, and the Parliament should adopt a supplementation of the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination in order to include sexual orientation and gender identity as prohibited grounds for discrimination in all areas;
- + The Ministry of justice should propose, and the Parliament should adopt amendments of the Law on free legal aid, in the direction of the following:
1. expanding the list of legal matters eligible for provision of free legal aid by explicitly including discrimination as a legal matter for which free legal aid may be requested/provided; 2. removing the prohibition of advertising and promotion of the services and competences of the regional offices and associations authorized to offer free legal aid;
- + The Ministry of labor, in its strategies for prevention and protection against discrimination and gender equality, should more actively involve the local government units in the protection against discrimination, by planning and budgeting specific activities for strengthening the local mechanisms for equal opportunities and protection against discrimination, and their involvement in the implementation of activities within the strategies and plans for gender equality and equal opportunities, as well as discrimination, on national level.
- + The Ministry of labor and social policy should include all grounds for protection against discrimination in the National strategy for equality and non-discrimination 2016-2020, by explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for prevention and protection against discrimination;

- + The local government units should increase their transparency and accountability for their work, particularly in the context of adopted policies for equal opportunities by publishing (on the municipalities' websites) the Statutes, Rules of procedure of the Municipal council, and other bylaws, as well as the policies for equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and the reports on the operation of the CEOWM and the Coordinator for equal opportunities;
- + The local government units should regulate and specifically determine the mandate and competences of the position in the job positions systematization acts and Statutes of the local government units, in line with the Law on equal opportunities of women and men and the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination;
- + The local government units should reduce or fully eliminate overlaps in the obligations of the Coordinators, in accordance with the mandate stipulated by the Law on equal opportunities of women and men and other obligations imposed to Coordinators within the local government unit, as a condition for complete dedication of the Coordinator to the tasks and activities planned in order to promote equal opportunities and protection against discrimination on local level;
- + The annual budgets of the local governments should include funds for initiatives, measures and procedures in the field of non-discrimination, in particular on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, within the strategic and action plans for equal opportunities in the local government units, prepared by the Coordinator for equal opportunities and the CEOWM;
- + The local government units should integrate the structural and political intersectionality of gender with the other axes of social exclusion and inequality within the strategic and action plans for gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination of the local government units;
- + The local government units should prepare a plan and allocate funds for building the capacities for a comprehensive understanding of the concepts of gender and gender equality for the Coordinator, deputies of the Ombudsmen and the representatives of the regional offices of the Ministry of justice;
- + The local government units should prepare a plan and allocate funds for continuous improvement of the capacities of the Coordinator, deputies of

the Ombudsmen and representatives of regional offices of the Ministry of justice, in particular with relevant and contemporary knowledge and facts about homosexuality and transgenderism, sensitization of views and beliefs, as well as about the problems and situations with the human rights of LGBT people;

- + The local government units should prepare a plan and allocate funds for continuous improvement of the capacities in regard to the relevant anti-discrimination legal framework in Macedonia and the mechanisms for protection against discrimination, particularly on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, which would address particularly the representatives of the regional offices of the Ministry of justice;
- + The local government units should strengthen the cooperation between CEOWM and the Coordinator for equal opportunities in its unit, and differentiate between the competences of these two mechanisms, in order to avoid an overlap of activities and overload of obligations of one mechanism, at the expense of the other;
- + Local mechanisms for protection against discrimination (CEOWM, the Coordinator and the Ombudsman) and should establish and develop this cooperation due to comprehensive following of the situation with equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as planning and implementation of complementary activities in the direction of promoting the situation of human rights on local level;
- + The local mechanisms for protection against discrimination (CEOWM, Coordinator and Ombudsman) and access to justice for citizens locally (representatives of regional offices of the Ministry of justice) should include and support associations working to protect and promote the rights of LGBT people.
- + Local associations for protection of the rights of LGBT people should increase their communication with local anti-discrimination mechanisms due to initializing and improving their cooperation. The initiation and strengthening of the cooperation should include joint projects, trainings, continuous exchange of information on the situation with discrimination locally, initiating joint activities for promotion of the principles of non-discrimination on local level, and education of citizens regarding discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity;

- + Local mechanisms for protection against discrimination (CEOWM, Coordinator and Ombudsman) and access to justice for citizens locally (representatives of regional offices of the Ministry of justice) should cooperate with the associations to adopt a Protocol for cooperation and coordination, with precisely determined obligations, between various mechanisms for equal opportunities and protection against discrimination on local level and civil organizations on local and national level, which are working in the area of gender equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity;
- + The Ombudsman should develop a contemporary methodology for recording, processing and presentation of results from the work of regional offices of the Ombudsman in the field of discrimination, in order to monitor the trends of violations and discrimination. This information shall be helpful in the creation of local policies for protection against discrimination of the Coordinator, CEOWM and associations working in that specific municipality, in order to eliminate gender inequality and provide protection against discrimination for all citizens under equal conditions.
- + The Ministry of justice should improve the staff capacities, basic technical resources and working conditions in its regional offices.
- + The Ministry of justice should provide a higher degree of decentralization of competences for the regional offices in relation to their mandate in line with the Law on free legal aid, by removing the obstacles for their involvement in promotional activities and independent decision-making for cooperation with civil organizations locally.
- + The Ministry of justice should develop a methodology and record keeping system within its regional offices in regard to free legal aid requested/ provided, number and identity of citizens, for which matter this free legal aid was requested / provided, and concise record-keeping of cases of discrimination;
- + The local mechanisms for protection against discrimination should increase their presence in the media, in order to promote their work in the field of equal opportunities and protection against discrimination, as well as sensitizing the public on the matters related to protection against discrimination on the grounds of gender, gender identity and sexual orientation on local level.



Х. Е. Р. А.
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