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The right to sexuality education is a human right



A Member Association of
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”The right to sexuality education is a human right

Health is a basic human right – without it, we cannot enjoy any other right. On the other hand, we cannot say our health is the most important to us if we do not care for our sexual and reproductive health.

To be healthy, both our sexual and reproductive health should serve us our whole lives – but to make it so, each and every one of us must be given the opportunity to accomplish their sexual and reproductive rights. Sexual rights guarantee our freedom, equality, privacy, autonomy, integrity and dignity so that we can realise and express our sexuality without any coercion, discrimination or violence.

Regardless of whether and how openly you discuss it, **sexuality is a natural and precious aspect of our lives, an essential and fundamental part of our humanity.** And yet, sexual and reproductive rights have been all too often denied and too long neglected. And although we are all born equal and free, not all of us can freely choose what kind of – sexual and reproductive – life we will live.

Discrimination, stigma, fear, hatred and violence lie in the core of the patriarchy, which teaches us from our earliest age how to behave and cruelly reminds us every time where we belong, should we ever happen to forget it. Layers and layers of inequality and injustice, double standards and rooted expectation are passed on from one generation to

the next. Majority quenches even the slightest flame of critical re-examination all too afraid to see themselves in the mirror, and look around themselves. Even if there are those who are willing to pause and think, they remain silent – because comfort is way too cosy a place, and the unknown tends to scare us.

Those who will not be quenched from the doubt and unacceptance, they rekindle, they defy, even when they only smoulder. And this is exactly why they are too often deprived of equality and dignity to which they are entitled, same as the majority who think that the system truly takes good care of them and their descendants.

And these generations of young people, on whose behalf their parents have recently spoken very loudly, who believe that the omnipresent peer violence, cyber harassment and teenage pregnancy have nothing to do with the roles men and women endorse in the society; that life will teach them what consent means; that the first sexual intercourse happens after one become of age; that they alone are able to give all the answers to their children – thinking that their children should not know more than them, hoping that their children will resort to them first when seeking the answers. And that there is need to discuss this in schools, where children spend a significant portion of their lives.

Health is a basic human right – without it, we cannot enjoy any other right. It goes hand in hand with the inviolable right to education, which should prepare us for what lies in store for us, including for the most valuable aspects of our lives. Only in this way can we come closer to living the way we have been born – equal and free.

Rumena Gjerdovska-Kojčeski – President Bojan Jovanovski – Executive Director

It is hard to believe that another year has gone by, overshadowed by the pandemic caused by COVID-19. It was also marked by the deepened social and healthcare crisis that was particularly felt among the vulnerable communities. Our healthcare and social services are aimed primarily at them, taking an account of their everyday needs, but also challenges that surround them, such as of the women living in a violent environment. If we add to this the intensive hate speech and attacks on the social media against the comprehensive sexuality education, and especially against our organisation, our members and our staff, then it will not be an overstatement to say that 2021 was undoubtedly a challenging year for us to achieve the goals we had set at its beginning.

The emergence of the so-called antifeminist groups and individuals who denigrate the gender concept and the comprehensive sexuality education in our country pose a serious threat for the democracy and the human rights. Resulting from their skilful manipulation of information and facts that (has) triggered social panic and fear, among other things, on account of the low level of media literacy in our country, for many of their followers and supporters comprehensive sexuality education constitutes a national threat for the traditional family values. We challenged the lies about sexual and reproductive rights with facts about benefits arising from the comprehensive sexuality education for the health and emotional wellbeing of young people, including via columns, video stories, television segments, educational materials, legal acts and networking with other organisations, with a significant help from our members, volunteers and civil society activists and supporters.

Last year was also marked by a number of exceptionally important accomplishments. Together with the Education Development Bureau, we implemented the experimental programme in three primary schools in Macedonia, and the evaluation will show us how the lessons in comprehensive sexuality education can further be integrated in the formal education system. Medical abortion was piloted at the University Gynaecology and Obstetrics Clinic: for the first time in our country, 200 girls and women could feel the benefits from this healthcare service, which proved to be efficient, safe and acceptable. As part of the working group in the Ministry of Labour and social Policy, we took part in preparing the new Law on the Prevention of Violence and Domestic Violence, which was passed by the Assembly at the beginning of the year. This new Law is important also because it provides for harmonisation of service standards for gender-based violence with the Istanbul Convention recommendations. Moreover, we succeeded in ensuring acknowledgement of comprehensive sexuality education in this Law, as part of the competences of the Ministry of Education and Science in designing primary and secondary education lessons and in organising continuous training for the teachers.

This year our 2018-2022 Strategy is coming to an end, which is why we have embarked on developing a new strategic framework. Reaching the new strategic objectives is paramount. Being the leading civil society organisations on sexual and reproductive health in the country, that contributes to the progressive national policies on human rights and gender equality, we have the obligation to continue to advocate for sexual and reproductive rights for all citizens of our country.

Finally, we would like to thank all our members, associates and donors for giving us their support and for everything they have done for HERA over the last years. We strongly believe that success will not escape us in the year to come. Let us stay healthy and safe.

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ID CARD

VISION

All people enjoy their sexuality freely and in social wellbeing.

MISSION

HERA leads a citizen action and encourages social change to ensure sexual rights for all and to enable improved sexual and reproductive health education and services, especially for the marginalised communities.

VALUES

- EQUALITY
- EQUITY
- SOCIAL JUSTICE
- EMPOWERMENT
- YOUTH PARTICIPATION
- DIVERSITY
- FREEDOM OF CHOICE
- FEMINISM

ADVOCACY

HERA took part in all the national law- and policy-making processes concerning the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and gender issues. HERA was one of the main promoters for change of the restrictive law on termination of pregnancy in 2019. For many years now, HERA has been the leader of a group of organisations successfully advocating for HIV and SRH services for the marginalised groups to be funded from the national budget in order to maintain the low HIV prevalence in the country.

SERVICES

With its stationary and mobile services, HERA covers more than 6,000 clients a year, in particularly persons who are at social risk. We provide free and confidential STI testing, contraceptives, gynaecological and dermatological examinations, ultrasonographic diagnosis, Pap testing, counselling and support against violence. HERA is the major provider of HIV testing in the country, especially among the marginalised groups of young people. With our First Family Centre, we are the only ones offering protection and support to persons affected by violence – women and children, but also psychosocial treatment of the perpetrators.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

With its team of educators, HERA is the only organisation that provides informal comprehensive sexuality education for the young people. The HERA Youth team consists of more than 50 volunteers who use peer education, creative workshops and digital tools to promote the protection of sexual and reproductive health of the young people and gender equality. HERA trains around 300 service providers annually on such topics as sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights and protection against violence, so as to expand the access to these services beyond its offices.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Being one of the socially most vulnerable groups in the country, HERA provides support to the Roma women and several informal groups in improving their social, health and economic rights. Caregivers are trained in HERA's social enterprise, Nega Plus, to provide homecare for the elderly, while the paralegal assistance programmes prepare the Roma women to provide onsite services for the protection of social and reproductive rights. Since 2019, we have been supporting the Roma women's advocacy group aiming at creating better employment opportunities for them on the labour market.

OUR SERVICES

YOUTH CENTERS FOR SEXUAL
AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
"I WANT TO KNOW"

VODNO

Elisije Popovski Street No. 2
(02) 3176 950

SHUTO ORIZARI

Suto Orizari Street b. b.
(02) 2651 955

FIRST FAMILY CENTER
OF THE CITY OF SKOPJE

Ivan Agovski Street No. 11/2-3
(02) 321 5 905
infopsc@hera.org.mk

MOBILE OUTPATIENT
CLINIC FOR HIV COUNSELING
AND TESTING

hivtest@hera.org.mk

MOBILE GYNAECOLOGY
OUTPATIENT CLINIC

hera@hera.org.mk

HERA WEB PAGE

www.hera.org.mk

HERA ON SOCIAL MEDIA



[@hera.macedonia](https://www.facebook.com/hera.macedonia)



[@HERA_mkd](https://twitter.com/HERA_mkd)



[@heramladi](https://www.instagram.com/heramladi)



[@HERAMacedonia](https://www.youtube.com/HERAMacedonia)

1 ADVOCACY



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First steps were made in making the medical abortion available in Macedonia



BACKGROUND

- In December 2020, the Clinical Guidelines on Termination of Pregnancy were adopted, regulating for the first time the medical protocol for medical abortion.
- As part of the prevention programme for protection of mothers' and children's health 500,000 MKD were allocated to piloting the medical abortion at the University Gynaecology and Obstetrics Clinic (UGAK).



ACTIVITIES

- We have signed a cooperation agreement with UGAK on rolling out the medical abortion service.
- We have renovated and technically equipped a dedicated room for providing information and counselling.
- We have trained 10 specialised gynaecologists in administering medical abortion.
- We have prepared an informative brochure on medical abortion, in Macedonian and Albanian languages.
- We have organised an expert meeting with 94 gynaecologists where the pilot study results were presented in cooperation with the Macedonian Medical Association.
- Exchange of experience through trainings with the Austrian Family Planning Association and the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection of Austria.



RESULTS

- The model has been set up and the UGAK medical staff has been trained, ensuring that the medical abortion service will continue to be provided at the Clinic well beyond the completion of the pilot phase.
- The pilot study has covered 208 women, with a remarkable 92.7% rate of success of the method, meaning that just 7.3% of women have required an additional surgical intervention to completely terminate the unintended pregnancy.
- Women's interest in this service was by 40% higher than the initially projected target, indicating that a larger number of women have taken the decision to undergo medical abortion on account of this method being simple and intimate compared to the surgical procedure.



FUTURE STEPS

- To train the hospital gynaecologists to expand the medical abortion service in other towns in the country.

- **DONORS:** Austrian Family Planning Association and International Planned Parenthood Federation



1. The room at UGAK where information and counselling about medical abortion can be received.
2. Promotional poster for medical abortion

Comprehensive sexuality education piloted for the first time in the 9th grade in primary schools across the country



BACKGROUND

- According to a [HBSC study and the World Health Organisation](#), as many as 45% of Macedonian adolescents suffer from mental health issues, and every fourth adolescent engaging in sexual intercourse does not use protection.
- In November 2019, the Government adopted a [decision](#) to implement a pilot curriculum for comprehensive sex education (CSE) in the 9th grade of primary education in four schools in the country.
- CSE research shows that 89-99% of the [teachers](#) support the introduction of this school subject, and as many as 82-96% of the [parents](#) accept that young people should learn about CSE topics.



ACTIVITIES

- HERA is the main partner to the Education Development Bureau (BRO) in implementing the pilot CSE curriculum in primary schools.
- We have been a part of 4 trainings involving theoretical input and practical work, which resulted in the certification of 14 teachers for implementing the pilot comprehensive sexuality education curriculum.
- As part of the BRO working group, we have participated in the selection of 4 schools for piloting the curriculum (experimental schools – where the curriculum was implemented, and control schools – where the effects of the curriculum were measured).
- HERA has also been involved in a survey into the sexual and reproductive health and rights in 20 Macedonian and Albanian schools, as part of the curriculum evaluation process.



RESULTS

- Teaching materials, handbooks and teacher's guidelines have been developed in Macedonian and Albanian languages to help implement the CSE pilot curriculum.
- The CSE pilot curriculum has been implemented involving 85 9th-grade pupils in three primary schools in the municipalities of Karpoš, Dračevo and Tetovo, following the curriculum developed in compliance with UNESCO recommendations for age 13 through 15.
- A methodological study has been prepared for evaluating the CSE pilot curriculum.
- Meetings with more than 100 parents have been held to inform them about the CSE pilot curriculum.



FUTURE STEPS

- To participate in the development of the national comprehensive sexuality education strategy.

- **DONORS:**
[International Planned Parenthood Federation](#) and the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)



1. Promo-materials for the CSE pilot program

Advocating for the sustainability of HIV prevention and introducing the HIV self-testing in the country



BACKGROUND

- HIV self-testing, as a proven preventive measure that helps give a timely HIV diagnosis, is still not available in our country.
- A survey into the attitudes and acceptability of HIV self-testing among men who have sex with men (MSM) has shown that there is a high level of acceptance of this innovative HIV prevention method.
- Even though in 2017 the Government committed to ensuring the sustainability of the HIV prevention programmes, the involvement of associations has not been regulated yet in the Law on Health Protection.



ACTIVITIES

- We have advocated for the sustainability of HIV services in collaboration with MPs, the National HIV Commission and the Government's Council for Cooperation with the Civil Sector.
- We have developed a methodological study and an operational protocol for piloting the HIV self-testing via the Internet.
- We have produced the [video instructions for home-based rapid HIV testing](#) and we have printed the brochure ["Everything You Need To Know about HIV Self-testing"](#).
- We have secured a donation of 1,000 HIV self-testing kits from the Ukraine-based partner organisation Alliance for Public Health.
- We have organised trainings for strengthening, intensifying and refreshing the HIV knowledge for the existing HIV testing counsellors.
- We have made a cost analysis of the HIV prevention services for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) among the groups exposed to the greatest risk from HIV, financially supported by the Population Protection Programme against the HIV Infection.



RESULTS

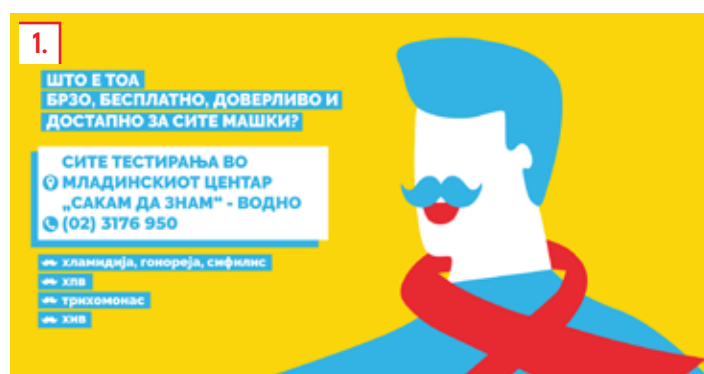
- The fourth in a row All-Party Parliamentary Group for HIV and SRH has been re-established, as a member of the [European Parliamentary Forum for SRH](#), comprising 9 MPs from the political parties SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE, DUI, DOM and LDP.
- In November, the [Government](#) adopted the amendments to the Law on Health Protection, which allowed for associations to implement healthcare activities aimed at the vulnerable and the hard-to-reach population groups.
- In December, the [2022-2024 Action Plan for Cooperation with the Civil Society](#) was adopted, which recognised the activities for the long-term funding mechanism for HIV programmes implemented by the civil sector.
- We have introduced the home-based HIV self-testing, in partnership with ["Stronger Together"](#) and the Clinic for Infectious Disease and Febrile Conditions.
- 18 HIV testing counsellors from 7 associations have participated in the HIV testing know-how upgrading training.



FUTURE STEPS

- To expand the home-based HIV self-testing to all groups affected by HIV and to advocate for the sustainability of the HIV policies and budgets.

- **DONORS:**
[Alliance for Public Health](#)
and [the Ministry of Health](#)



1. Promotional e-banner as part of the European Testing Week

Protection of women against violence – a new law, a new curriculum for the professionals and monitoring of the existing victim support services



BACKGROUND

- The 2014 Law on the Prevention, Combating and Protection against Domestic Violence is not in compliance with the Istanbul Convention.
- There is a lack of support services for victims of gender-based violence (GBV), especially outside of Skopje.
- There are no training programmes in the country for service providers in the specialised counselling centres for victims of gender-based and domestic violence.



ACTIVITIES

- We have been a part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy's working group for the preparation of the new Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.
- We have conducted a research into monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan for Implementing the Istanbul Convention, concerning the introduction of services for advancing the protection of victims of violence.
- We have designed a training programme for professionals providing counselling services to the victims of violence.



RESULTS

- In May, HERA was selected as a civil sector representative in the new National Coordinating Body for Implementing the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.
- The new Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, adopted in January 2021, recognised the comprehensive sexuality education in schools as part of the prevention and protection efforts against gender-based violence among young people.
- We have prepared a [Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Implementing the Istanbul Convention](#), with key recommendations for advancing the onsite protection concerning the introduction of support services for victims of violence.
- We have also developed a Manual with comprehensive training delivery programme for service providers in the specialised counselling centres for victims of gender-based violence.



FUTURE STEPS

- To advocate for a full implementation of the Action Plan for Implementing the Istanbul Convention and of the Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

→ **DONOR:** [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)



1. Public parliamentary hearing on the new Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Equal Opportunities Commission, December 2020, Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia [Source: Ministry of Interior]

2. Constitutional meeting of the National Coordinating Body for Implementing the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 2nd July, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia [Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy]

Family doctors – partners in sexual and reproductive health service provision



BACKGROUND

- Due to the total absence or insufficient presence of gynaecologists in certain regions in the country, contraception and other sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services are unavailable to many girls and women.
- The list of healthcare services in the family medicine profession, adopted by the Ministry of Health in December 2019, includes some of the sexual and reproductive health services.



ACTIVITIES

- We have conducted a national mapping of family doctors in 10 regions across the country in order to assess the human resources, premises and equipment, competences, the number of registered patients and the coverage with SRH services, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Health Insurance Fund and the Family Medicine Centre.
- We have developed a curriculum pursuant to which family doctors could provide sexual and reproductive health services.
- We have delivered a 5-day training on contraception and sexual and reproductive health for family doctors involving a theoretical input and practical work.



RESULTS

- A national working group has been set up for sexual and reproductive health services in the primary healthcare, by way of resolution from the Ministry of Health, and in addition to involving the health facilities and professional associations, it also includes representatives of Roma woman, persons with disabilities and women from rural areas.
- Locations have been selected in 4 health regions within the health centres in the towns of Delčevo, Radoviš, Makedonski Brod and Resen, to accordingly equip the medical offices and pilot the provision of SRH services.
- The contraception and sexual and reproductive health curriculum has been accredited by the Family Medicine Centre and 25 family doctors in 10 health regions in the country have been trained.



FUTURE STEPS

- To equip 4 medical offices and pilot the provision of contraception and sexual and reproductive health services by family doctors;
- To develop a national plan for SRH service provision and to make recommendations to family doctors on how to charge for the SRH services.

- DONOR:
[IPPF Japan Trust Fund](#)



1. Meetings with the Minister for Health, Mr. Filipče, in the process of identifying the four health regions for piloting the contraception and SRH services by the family doctors

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people



BACKGROUND

- The COVID-19 pandemic had an adverse effect on the young people's opportunity to receive services and enjoy their sexual and reproductive rights.
- It is necessary to obtain data that will thoroughly capture the health crisis impact on the young people's access to services and their practicing of sexual rights, in particular, for the most vulnerable groups.



ACTIVITIES

- We have participated in designing the methodology for and in the implementation of the qualitative and quantitative research in the region and on the national level.
- We have conducted a survey into the COVID-19 impact on the young people in the Republic of North Macedonia.
- We have organised networking and coordinating meetings with regional partners from Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo and the IPPF European Network.



RESULTS

- We have organised 5 focus groups with young people from various vulnerable categories, covering a total of 33 pupils.
- We have conducted 6 in-depth interviews with representatives from institutions and civil society organisations.
- We have covered 225 young people with our online questionnaires, including young mothers, young members of the LGBT+ community, young Roma women and young people from rural areas.

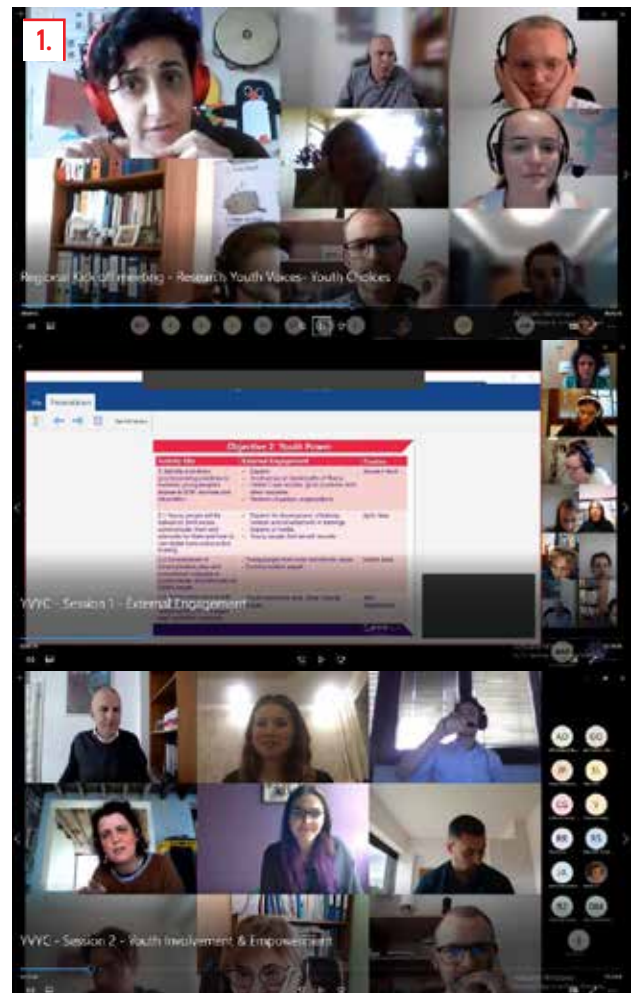


FUTURE STEPS

- To publish a national report on the COVID-19 impact on the sexual and reproductive health and rights among young people in the Republic of North Macedonia;
- To set up a National Youth Group that will advocate for and implement the activities arising from the research recommendations.

- **DONOR:** International Planned Parenthood Federation

1. Meetings with the regional partners regarding the preparation and conducting of the survey into the COVID-19 impact on the young people



2

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT



The “Nega Plus” Social Enterprise – licensed homecare service providers



BACKGROUND

- For the purpose of employing Roma woman, in 2017 HERA started the homecare social enterprises “Nega Plus”, whose social mission is to provide employment for Roma woman.
- In 2019, “Nega Plus” was recognised as a potential partner to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for implementing the reforms aimed at promoting the social services.
- In 2020, “Nega Plus” and the Municipality of Kisela Voda applied for and launched a homecare service provision project for the residents of this municipality.



ACTIVITIES

- We have provided through “Nega Plus” continuous homecare services and have promoted the “Nega Plus” services overall.
- We have organised homecare training for caregivers, which resulted in the certification of 16 women and 2 men as caregivers.
- We have developed a study, an annual social protection plan and an annual financial plan with the relevant accompanying documentation for monitoring and evaluating the homecare service provision and we have applied with the Licensing Commission to obtain a service provider's licence.



RESULTS

- “Nega Plus” has covered a total of 22 families on the territory of the City of Skopje providing them with continuous homecare services, and particularly focusing on the elderly.
- An Information Centre has been opened in the Municipality of Kisela Voda, where the residents can obtain information about the services.
- We have obtained the licence for practicing social protection activities – as homecare service providers.



FUTURE STEPS

- To keep providing services on the territory of the Municipality of Kisela Voda.

- **DONOR:** Ministry of Labour and Social Policy



1. Moments from the homecare training for caregivers

2. Awarding of certificates to 16 women and 2 men as caregivers, following the completed training

From onsite education to advocating for access to sexual and reproductive rights for Roma women



BACKGROUND

- The health of around 8,000 Roma women in their reproductive period is now at risk for not having a general gynaecologist in the Municipality of Šuto Orizari.
- A total of **36% of the Roma women in Šuto Orizari** have reported that, due to their financial condition, they are unable to provide protective equipment against COVID-19.
- Although a declining trend has been noticed, **charging illegally for the gynaecological services is still widely practiced**, even though women are entitled to these services free of charge.



ACTIVITIES

- By paying them door-to-door visits, the Šuto Orizari Women's Initiative has been informing the Roma women about sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Legal aid and support services have been provided at the "I Want to Know" Youth Centre in Šuto Orizari.
- During onsite visits, paralegals have informed the residents about governmental social and economic measures related to COVID-19.
- We have procured and distributed personal protective equipment for COVID-19 (facemasks, hygiene products and disinfectants) and humanitarian packages for pregnant and postpartum Roma women.
- We have advocated on both national and local level for promoting the access of the Roma to general practitioners and general gynaecologists.



RESULTS

- A total of 895 families, including 216 pregnant woman and 679 women in their reproductive period, have been visited and informed about sexual and reproductive health.
- A total of 302 beneficiaries, including 264 women, have been covered with the legal aid and counselling service.
- A total of 2,660 protective masks, 310 disinfectant gels and 400 humanitarian packages have been procured and distributed to the Roma women coming from the most vulnerable families.
- In partnership with "Romalitiko", we have conducted a survey into the **Usage Rate of Social and Child Protection Rights by the Roma Community**.
- With our advocacy efforts, we have secured a 6-month access to general gynaecologists and access to general practitioners in Šuto Orizari.



FUTURE STEPS

- To keep providing free legal aid and support to the Roma women and men, focusing on their reproductive health and protection against discrimination.

- **DONOR:** Foundation Open Society – Macedonia

1. Representatives of the Šuto Orizari Women's Initiative distributing personal protective equipment for COVID-19 to the Roma population



After 10 years of activism for the rights of Roma women, the Šuto Orizari Women's Initiative have founded a civil society organisations



BACKGROUND

- The informal group known as the "Šuto Orizari Women's Initiative" have been committed to improving the reproductive rights of Roma women in Šuto Orizari for over 10 years now.
- In addition to their efforts to resolve the persisting issue of providing a general gynaecologist in Šuto Orizari, they have been actively involved in ensuring social rights and protecting against discrimination, too.
- Through their field work and advocacy, the Šuto Orizari Women's Initiative have come to be recognised as the community leader by both the local and national institutions and by international organisations.



ACTIVITIES

- We have provided continuous paralegal aid and support services, and have accompanied women during their visits to health facilities and social protection institutions.
- We have delivered trainings and workshops to members of the Šuto Orizari Women's Initiative in administrative and financial operations and project management, and for the development of their statute, strategic plan and a three-year work programme.
- Together we have conducted the third consecutive field research [Community Score Card 2021](#) reflecting the Šuto Orizari Roma women's access to reproductive health services.
- We have organised advocacy meetings in the Municipality of Šuto Orizari and we have sent our recommendations to the decision makers for improving the COVID-19 measures among the Roma population.



RESULTS

- On 7th July 2021, the Šuto Orizari Women's Initiative was formally registered as a civil society organisation called ["Initiative for the Rights of Women in Šuto Orizari"](#).
- The strategic plan and the three-year work programme of the association Initiative for the Rights of Women in Šuto Orizari have been developed.
- A total of 1,203 beneficiaries have received paralegal aid and support, including 1,012 women.
- We have been involved in the working group for the development of the Roma Inclusion Strategy (2022-2030) where our healthcare-related recommendations have been included.



FUTURE STEPS

- HERA will continue to provide technical assistance to the association Initiative for the Rights of Women in Šuto Orizari for their providing of legal aid and advocating for social and health rights of the population.

→ **DONOR:** [Foundation Open Society – Macedonia](#)

1. Part of the everyday setting in the Šuto Orizari Women's Initiative



Community advocating for the improvement of employment conditions for Roma women on the local and national level



BACKGROUND

- Roma women are exposed to multiple and intersectional discrimination on daily basis, and the patriarchal value system, low level of education and early marriages make them economically dependent.
- The 2020 [Report on the Usage Rate of Employment Measures](#) reveals that only 205 persons, or 2.6% of those who have used any of the employment measures, were Roma women.
- A [2020 Report](#) shows that only 6 Roma woman are employed at managerial positions across 156 monitored state institutions.



ACTIVITIES

- We have participated in the working groups that have developed the Roma Inclusion Strategy (2022-2030) and the National Action Plan for Roma Women.
- We have organised advocacy meetings and workshops with 5 local self-governments for developing their local action plans for employment of the Roma.
- We have been a part of the Advocacy Week in Brussels where we have advocated for the employment and healthcare issues Roma women have to deal with.
- We have delivered trainings to 8 members of the Equal Employment Opportunities Advocacy Group in budget monitoring and gender responsible budgeting, media advocacy and strategic planning.



RESULTS

- The European Commission's 2020 Progress Report for the Republic of North Macedonia has integrated HERA's and Advocacy Group's findings and recommendations concerning the issue of employment of Roma women.
- We have conducted a [Monitoring of the Employment of Roma Women in State Institutions in 2020](#) as well as a [Monitoring of the Usage Rate of the Active Employment Measures and Services by Roma Women in 2020](#).
- 5 local action plans for the employment of Roma women have been developed, of which 3 have been adopted by the Municipal Councils of Karpoš, Gazi Baba and Ćorče Petrov.



FUTURE STEPS

- To monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan for Roma Women concerning their employment and to provide technical assistance in designing the pilot employment measures for Roma women as part of the National Operational Employment Plan.

- **DONOR:**
[The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation](#)

1. Members of the Equal Employment Opportunities Advocacy Group have upgraded their advocacy knowledge and skills in a series of trainings



Young people in Macedonia demand comprehensive sexuality education



BACKGROUND

- More than 1 out of 10 adolescents have reported to have been victims of cyberviolence at least once over the last two months.
- Republic of North Macedonia is among the five countries with the highest gender disproportion in sexual experiences among boys (38%) and girls (4%) who have reported to have engaged in sexual intercourse before turning 15.
- Every other girl aged 15 (45%) has suffered depression symptoms for at least two consecutive weeks, as well as inability to overcome the situation (34%).



ACTIVITIES

- We have delivered 20 educational sessions in comprehensive sexuality education across Macedonia and a 5-day training for the new CSE peer educators.
- We have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Student Association of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM) and we have delivered CSE educational sessions at the UKIM's Student Cultural Centre.
- We have developed the methodology and organised focus groups with senior peer educators to review the CSE peer education manual.
- We have also organised a comprehensive sexuality education summer camp: a total of 31 young persons have been covered with 7 CSE modules.
- We have raised the awareness about the need for introducing sexuality education in schools through three campaigns: "CSE Has Taught Me"; "#CSEatSchooldesks" and "Ask the CSE Educator".



RESULTS

- We have developed a new peer education manual in sexual reproductive health and rights.
- We have designed a website for comprehensive sexuality education to inform the young people and their parents www.seksualnoobrazovanie.mk.
- A total of 266 young people have been covered with our comprehensive sexuality education workshops, of which 196 have passed all the 7 CSE modules, and we have trained 11 peer educators in CSE.
- We have developed the public policy paper "[Violence against LGBTI Youth Is Invisible For the Non-teaching Professionals in Skopje Schools](#)" in Macedonian and in English, with recommendation to the responsible authorities to how overcome this problem.
- We have concluded an agreement with the Kumanovo Health Centre to equip rooms for opening a new "I Want To Know" Youth Centre and we have developed an action plan for its operation.
- We have organised a panel discussion and screening of the short film "Tina's Problem" to raise the awareness about the need for CSE in the formal education system and for promoting sexual and reproductive health.



FUTURE STEPS

- To implement the informal sexuality education in partnership with education, healthcare and social institutions, civil society organisations and parents.
- **DONORS:** [International Planned Parenthood Federation](#), [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#), [Embassy of France in Skopje](#) and [Surecheck](#)

YOUTH VOLUNTEERING AND ACTIVISM

→ In 2021, [HERA youth](#) expanded their team with 60 more young people from every region in Macedonia. Moreover, the pool of educators has been upgraded with 11 new young CSE educators, who took the required 5-day training. The other HERA youth sectors have also worked hard to produce 12 [“Sexy Neighbourhood”](#) podcast episodes with thematic discussions about the impact of the pandemic on SRHR, mental health and sexuality, intersectional feminism, and many other aspects of the issues the young people face. Since 2021, thanks to our volunteers, all episodes of the “Sexy Neighbourhood” have been available on Spotify, the largest podcast and song streaming network, allowing the “sexy neighbours” talks to reach a much wider audience in addition to the regular one listening to them on the Radio MOF. The [Feminist Book Club](#) has been meeting regularly on a monthly basis, and the number of new members has grown by 20%. HERA youth have always walked the front lines of all protests organised in support of equality for LGBT people; justice for the “Public Room” case; and for the social and economic equality of women. From their youthful spirit and their creative freedom in designing and implementing activities emerged the “Ghost Stories”, “Scavenger Hunt” and “Taboo Breaking Action”, where games and anecdotes were used to teach the young people about healthy relationships and reproductive health.

→ **DONORS:** [International Planned Parenthood Federation](#) and [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)











1. CSE can be taught and learnt by the lake as well: CSE summer camp, Ohrid

2. “Taboo Breaking Action” gave an opportunity to the passers-by in the Skopje City Park – both younger and older ones – to show which part of the body still was a taboo for them

3. Development of the feminism under capitalism – one of the topics that HERA youth openly discussed in “Sexy Neighbourhood”

SERVICES AND STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITIES FOR SERVICE PROVISION

SERVICE NAME AND TYPE	NUMBER OF CLIENTS	CLIENT DIVISION IN TARGET GROUPS	NUMBER AND SHARE OF WOMEN	NUMBER AND SHARE OF VULNERABLE GROUPS	NUMBER AND SHARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 10-24
First Family Centre (PSC) 	317	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 130 women victims, 44 minor children as direct or indirect victims → 51 perpetrators of violence → 92 parents and other family members affected by the violence 	203 (64 %)	171 (54 %)	43 (14 %)
"I Want To Know" Youth Centre at Vodno 	980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 143 men who have sex with men (MSM) → 18 sex workers (men or women) (SW) → 5 people who inject drugs (PWID) → 279 young people → Additionally, we have covered 335 socially excluded people (unemployed / without health insurance) 	386 (39 %)	780 (79 %)	148 (37 %)
"I Want To Know" Youth Centre in Šuto Orizari 	1.261	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 9 MSM → 249 SW → 3 PWID → 407 young people → Additionally, we have covered 593 socially excluded people (unemployed / without health insurance) 	1030 (82 %)	1261 (100 %)	407 (32 %)
Counselling Service for Prevention against Drug Use 	348	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 135 parents → 195 young people → 18 other people (partners and experts) 	176 (50 %)	195 (56 %)	195 (56 %)

<p>Mobile Gynaecology Outpatient Clinic</p> 	636	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 257 SW → 97 PWID → 47 young people → 121 women from rural areas → Additionally, we have covered 109 other socially excluded people (unemployed people at social risk) → 4 homeless people from the Vizbegovo Reception Centre and 1 domestic violence victim 	636 (100 %)	636 (100 %)	47 (7 %)
<p>HIV Testing</p> 	2.022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 811 MSM → 602 PWID → 442 SW → 167 young people and other at-risk people 	531 (26 %)	1860 (92 %)	503 (25 %)
<p>HIV Counselling Service In partnership*</p> 	380	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → People living with HIV and their partners and families → People at higher risk of HIV transmission 	37 (10 %)	350 (92 %)	27 (7 %)
<p>Medical abortion (pilot) In partnership**</p> 	239	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Women 	239 (100 %)	56 (23 %)	57 (24 %)



STATIONARY



MOBILE

* In cooperation with the University Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Conditions

** In cooperation with the University Clinic for Gynaecology and Obstetrics

Specialised counselling centres for victims of gender-based violence pilot their services outside of Skopje



BACKGROUND

- According to the National Action Plan for Implementing the Istanbul Convention, the country has committed to open 10 counselling centres by 2023 for domestic violence victims, perpetrators and children.
- Outside the capital city, there are no specialised services for victims of gender-based violence that are managed by civil society organisations whose staff has been trained by applying the standards for this type of service.



ACTIVITIES

- We have delivered a series of 5 advanced trainings with an overall duration of 11 days to the service providers working in the specialised counselling centres for victims, in such topics as: basis of the gender-based violence, protection system, standards and referrals, counselling and psychosocial support to victims, and case management.
- We have provided technical assistance for the development of protocols and policies concerning the treatment of victims and providing them with psychosocial support in Strumica, Štip and Veles.
- We have made a situational analysis to map the civil society organisations that will receive a new series of trainings for providing specialised services, and the municipalities prepared to finance the specialised services in cases of violence against women.
- We have participated in the preparation of the local action plans for supporting the specialised counselling centres for victims of violence in the municipalities of Štip and Strumica.



RESULTS

- To a total of 22 people from three civil society organisations and from the Social Work Centres in Strumica, Štip and Veles we have delivered an advanced training in service provision in the setting of a counselling centre for victims of violence.
- Meetings of multisectoral teams have been held to improve the cooperation and the quality of the support system for the victims of gender-based violence in Strumica, Štip and Veles.
- The offices of the counselling centres in Strumica and in Štip have been equipped, mentorship has been ensured for delivering direct services and the specialised work licences for the counselling centres have been obtained.
- In partnership with **"Skaj Plus"** and **"EHO" – Štip**, in December we launched the piloting of the service provision in the specialised counselling centres for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Strumica and Štip.
- The local draft action plans for supporting the specialised counselling centres for victims of gender-based violence in the Municipality of Štip and Municipality of Strumica have been developed.
- 2 new civil society organisations – NRC Kumanovo and the Women's Organisation of Sveti Nikole – have been mapped for building the know-how of professional to manage the support services for victims of gender-based violence.



FUTURE STEPS

- To implement local campaigns for raising the awareness about the availability of the specialised services managed by the associations **"Skaj Plus"** and **"EHO" – Štip**;
- To advocate for the adoption of the local plans and budgets and to license the counselling centres in Strumica and Štip so as to ensure their sustainability in the future.

- **DONORS:**
UN Women and
the European Commission



1.

1. "Skaj Plus" and "EHO" deepened their knowledge and skills through trainings, enabling them to pilot GBV and family violence services in the local counseling centers

Involving men to prevent gender-based violence and engaging with perpetrators of violence



BACKGROUND

- More than 90% of perpetrators of domestic violence are men, and more than 80% of the victims of violence are women.
- The Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention provides for the provision of services that will improve the protection of victims of gender-based violence and of victims of domestic violence, and implementation of activities that will prevent the commission of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- The 2021 [European Commission Progress Report](#) for our country recommends that the implementation of the National Plan for Implementing the Istanbul Convention be improved.

<https://www.sozialministerium.at/en.html>



ACTIVITIES

- We have designed a concept for a Centre for Providing Support to Men and Engaging with Perpetrators of Violence focused on safety of victims.
- We have participated in the preparation of the national Action Plan for Preventing Gender-Based Violence and an Action Plan for Engaging with Perpetrators of Violence.



RESULTS

- Two multisectoral national working groups have been set up to prevent the gender-based violence and to engage with the perpetrators of violence.
- In partnership with ["Reaktor"](#) and [Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark](#), we have organised the conference ["Take Care Like a Man – from awareness to involvement: involving men to prevent gender-based violence and engaging with perpetrators of violence"](#).



FUTURE STEPS

- To organise a series of trainings on preventing gender-based violence and engaging with perpetrators of violence;
- To design the concept and the financial analysis for the Centre for Provision of Support to Men and a study visit to Graz and Vienna;
- To finalise the action plans for preventing gender-based violence and engaging with perpetrators of violence.

- **DONORS:** [Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark](#) and [Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection of Austria](#)

1.



1. Conference "Take Care Like a Man – from awareness to involvement: involving men to prevent gender-based violence and engaging with perpetrators of violence".

You are not alone! The First Family Centre of the City of Skopje - the first support line for women victims of violence



BACKGROUND

- According to the 2020 [data](#) of the Ministry of Interior, 90% of the perpetrators of violence are men, while 80% of victims who have reported the violence are women.
- Only 2% of those who have survived the violence from their partners and 21% who have survived the violence from their former partners have reported the violence to the police. The reasons include embarrassment from the surrounding and distrust in institutions, where the staff should mandatorily receive a training in gender-based violence.



ACTIVITIES

- We have provided support and psychosocial treatment for victims, children and perpetrators of violence.
- We have also provided free legal aid and representation in court to the victims of violence.
- We have designed educational and [promotional materials](#).
- We have participated in the production of a [media story](#) that tells the success story of a victim of violence.



RESULTS

- The First Family Centre has covered a total of 316 beneficiaries, of which 129 are women and 44 are minor children victims of gender-based and domestic violence.
- These beneficiaries have visited the First Family Centre 1,713 times and have received a total of 2,358 counselling sessions and other services.
- A total of 51 perpetrators of violence have been involved in a programme that deals with the treatment of violence and changing the model of violent behaviour.
- A total of 9 victims of gender-based and domestic violence have received support from a lawyer and the costs for their representation and court and/or court fees have been covered.
- The "You Are Not Alone" brochure was produced in [Macedonian](#) and [Albanian](#) languages, and 291 beneficiaries have been covered with the [Facebook page](#) of the service.



FUTURE STEPS

- To license the services in compliance with the Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence;
- To provide continuous specialised psychosocial support services to women and children victims and treatment for the perpetrators of violence.

- **DONORS:**
[City of Skopje](#)
and [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)

1. Some of the informational materials on the First Family Centre services

1. СТЕ СЛУШНАЛЕ ЛИ ЗА ПРВИОТ СЕМЕЕН ЦЕНТАР (ПСЦ) НА ХЕРА?

Работи уште од 2013 година и е првото специјализирано советување за насилство кај нас.

ШТО МОЖЕ ДА ДОБИЕШ КАКО УСЛУГА?

Психолошка поддршка и третман доколку си жртва, сторител или доколку твоето дете има потреба од поддршка и помош како директен или индиректен сведок на насилство.

Услугите ги дава искусен тим од социјален работник, психолог и психотерапевти

БЕСПЛАТНО И ДОВЕРЛИВО!

ЗАКАЖИ ГО СВОЈОТ ТЕРМИН!

ПРВ СЕМЕЕН ЦЕНТАР
Ул. „Костурски херои“ бр. 50, Скопје | 02/3200 007
infopsc@hera.org.mk | www.facebook.com/infopsc

Risk prevention and protection against substance use



BACKGROUND

- In our country there are no dedicated prevention programmes for substance use among the young people nor access to free and confidential services for the young substance users.
- A total of 16% of the young people aged 15 through 30 use some sort of substance, and the discrimination against people using substances is still prevailing.



ACTIVITIES

- We have provided preventive counselling to young parents and partners in the Counselling Centre operating as part of the "I Want To Know" Youth Centres at Vodno and in Šuto Orizari.
- We have established cooperation with the both the teachers and the non-teaching professionals in the high schools of the City of Skopje for referring the students to the preventive counselling.
- We have promoted the Counselling Centre on [TV shows](#) and on the social media.



RESULTS

- A total of 348 children, of which 309 as new beneficiaries, have received preventive counselling, including 125 parents and 205 young people.
- The Counselling Centre has been visited 403 times and 503 services have been provided by the psychiatrists who provide their services there.
- We have produced 2 new banners to promote the [Facebook page](#) of the Counselling Centre, which covered 1,760 beneficiaries and received 166 new followers.



FUTURE STEPS

- To provide direct risk prevention and protection services against substance use to young people, parents and partners..

→ DONOR: [City of Skopje](#)



1. Some of the promotional materials for the Counselling Centre

When the system forgets, the mobile gynaecology outpatient clinic attends and reminds!



BACKGROUND

- Some of the health regions and rural areas have not a single general gynaecologist, which limits the access of the women in these regions to their basic sexual and reproductive health services (SRH).
- Because of the stigma and the discrimination, women sex workers and people who use drugs have a limited access to friendly services for diagnosing and treating the sexually transmitted infections and for modern contraceptives.



ACTIVITIES

- Free services have been provided across the country for diagnosing and treating the sexually transmitted infections, for ultrasonography and for Pap smear tests through the mobile gynaecology outpatient clinic.
- We have provided services for emergency contraception and modern contraceptives (oral pills and IUDs) and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.
- We have distributed condoms, lubricants and SRH informational materials.



RESULTS

- The mobile outpatient clinic has provided gynaecological services to 634 women, including 257 women sex workers, 121 women from rural areas, 97 women who use drugs and other vulnerable and marginalised people.
- A total of 627 women from vulnerable groups have done the Pap smear test, and 72 women were given modern contraceptives.
- Cooperation has been established with the Municipality of Konče and we have organised regular gynaecological examinations for women residents of this municipality and the surrounding areas.
- The number of women clients of the mobile outpatient clinic has increased by 26% compared to 2020.



FUTURE STEPS

- To continue providing SRH services through the mobile outpatient clinic among women sex workers, women who inject drugs and women from remote areas where they have no access to a gynaecologist.

- **DONORS:**
[Ministry of Health](#) and [Scase](#)

1.

Мобилната гинеколошка амбуланта на ХЕРА се грижи за сексуалното и репродуктивното здравје и на луѓето во руралните средини!

Преку неа можете да добиете бесплатни и доверливи гинеколошки услуги дури и ако немате здравствено осигурување.

Ако сакате да дознаете повеќе за мобилната гинеколошка амбуланта или да додадете во Вашето место на живеење, контактирајте не на hera@hera.org.mk или ☎ (02) 329 0395!



1. Some of the promotional materials for the mobile gynaecology outpatient clinic

2. The mobile gynaecology outpatient clinic before leaving

Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services



BACKGROUND

- Dedicated centres for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) are not available in the health facilities in our country, such that would be responsive to the needs of the young people and the key populations and that would provide free and confidential HIV and SRH services.
- More than 8,000 Roma women in Šuto Orizari have no access to a general gynaecologist.



ACTIVITIES

- The "I Want To Know" Youth Centres at Vodno and in Šuto Orizari have provided free and confidential gynaecological and dermatological services for diagnosing and treating the STIs, for ultrasonography and for modern contraceptive methods.
- Education sessions have been delivered to the young people and the key populations and psychosocial support has been provided.
- Condoms, lubricants and informational materials have been distributed.
- We have organised two one-day trainings for service providers in the Youth Centres.



RESULTS

- A total of 1,505 beneficiaries from the vulnerable groups have received 6,020 free sexual and reproductive health services in the "I Want To Know" Youth Centres.
- 245 HIV tests have been performed and education sessions have been delivered to 145 young people and to populations at risk from HIV.
- A total of 68 women have done the Pap smear tests, 185 women have received modern contraceptives, and 163 beneficiaries have been tested to STIs (syphilis, HPV, gonorrhoea and chlamydia).
- 3,939 condoms, 917 lubricants and 1,205 educational materials have been distributed.
- A total of 166 persons at social risk have received 513 services from a social worker.



FUTURE STEPS

- To continue providing youth-friendly SRH services to the young people and to the marginalised groups focusing on HIV testing, SPI diagnosis and treatment, and modern contraception.

→ **DONOR:** Ministry of Health



1. Our "I Want To Know" Youth Centres at Vodno and in Šuto Orizari have been providing free and confidential HIV and SRH services for more than 10 years

Mobile and stationary HIV testing services for the vulnerable groups



BACKGROUND

- According to estimates, by the end of 2020, up to 34% of persons living with HIV in the country were not aware of their positive HIV status.
- The rate of late diagnosis of the newly detected HIV cases has grown, whereas successful treatment requires that HIV be detected in time.



ACTIVITIES

- Free and confidential HIV testing and counselling services have been provided in 11 towns in cooperation with 14 civil society organisations with two mobile outpatient clinics specifically equipped for this purpose and in the stationary centres of the organisations.
- Two awareness raising campaigns about the importance of HIV testing were organised as part of the Spring and Autumn European Testing Weeks, under the title [“HIV positive stories: Living my life in full colour”](#).
- A [self-testing brochure](#) was produced and the home-based HIV self-testing was piloted among gay, bi and other men who have sex with men and among transgender people.



RESULTS

- In the mobile and stationary HIV testing services, and in cooperation with partner organisations, a total of 2,255 rapid HIV test were performed in 2021, of which 92% were among the groups at higher risk from HIV.
- 6,711 condoms, 4,270 lubricants and 1,471 informational and educational materials for HIV prevention have been distributed.
- A total of 9 persons, or 21% of all the newly diagnosed HIV cases in our country in 2021 have been detected through the HIV testing services provided by civil society organisations.

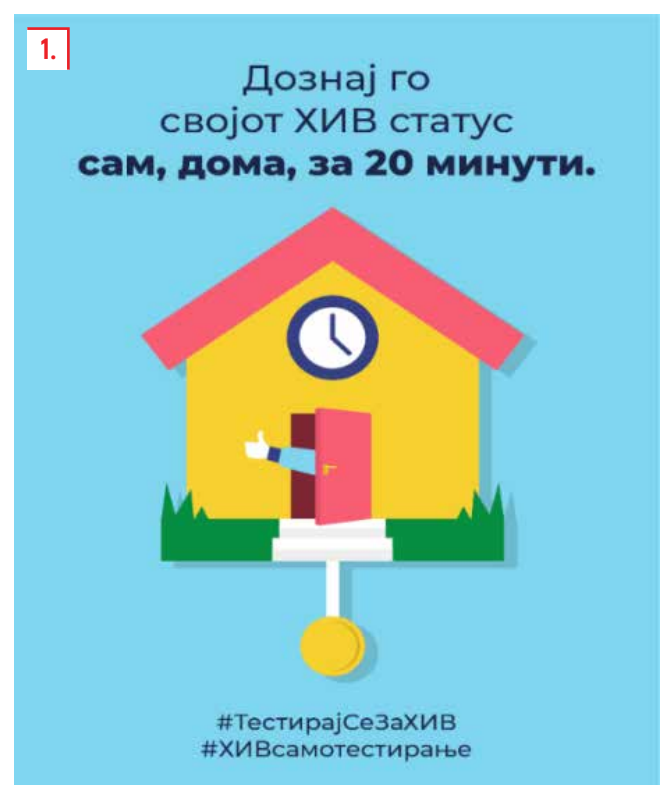


FUTURE STEPS

- To continue providing mobile and stationary HIV testing services and to expand the home-based HIV self-testing among all groups affected by HIV.

- **DONOR:**
[Ministry of Health](#)

1. Poster promoting the HIV self-testing among key populations



3

CASE STUDIES AND TESTIMONIALS



THE FIRST FAMILY CENTRE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The husband's psychological violence against our client Elena* started at the very beginning of their marriage, which has lasted for 15 years, during which period they have had two daughters, aged 7 and 9. She spoke about the psychological violence by her husband, combined with constant control, jealousy and accusations of cheating. "I feel as if he's following me with a camera all the time, he calls me nonstop. He won't let me take a single breath without telling him where I am and who I'm with." Elena is a 43-year-old, university-educated woman, who is unemployed, which makes her economically dependent on her husband, which is why she kept giving up on the idea of taking her children and leaving him for good.

After she approached the First Family Centre, Elena was immediately involved in the counselling process with a team of counsellors for victims of domestic violence. In the course of the counselling process, she also reported her husband's physical violence, however, without visible marks. Since the blows were delivered to parts of the body where the medical professionals could not see them, after the examination, she did not receive any medical documentation to prove it. Once the client became sufficiently psychologically strengthened, she was offered a free legal aid and representation in court so as to file for divorce and leave her husband,

Elena moved out to a rented place together with her children, and she managed to find a job. Also, through an organised donation, the client received financial support to pay her electricity bills, and she was provided with a one-off cash assistance to cover her running costs and rent. The divorce process was completed, and she won full custody of her children, while the former husband was ordered to pay alimony. Psychological and physical violence have been completely eliminated, Elena is now employed, she lives with her two children and she keeps seeing our counsellors to recover from the trauma and improve her parenting skills.

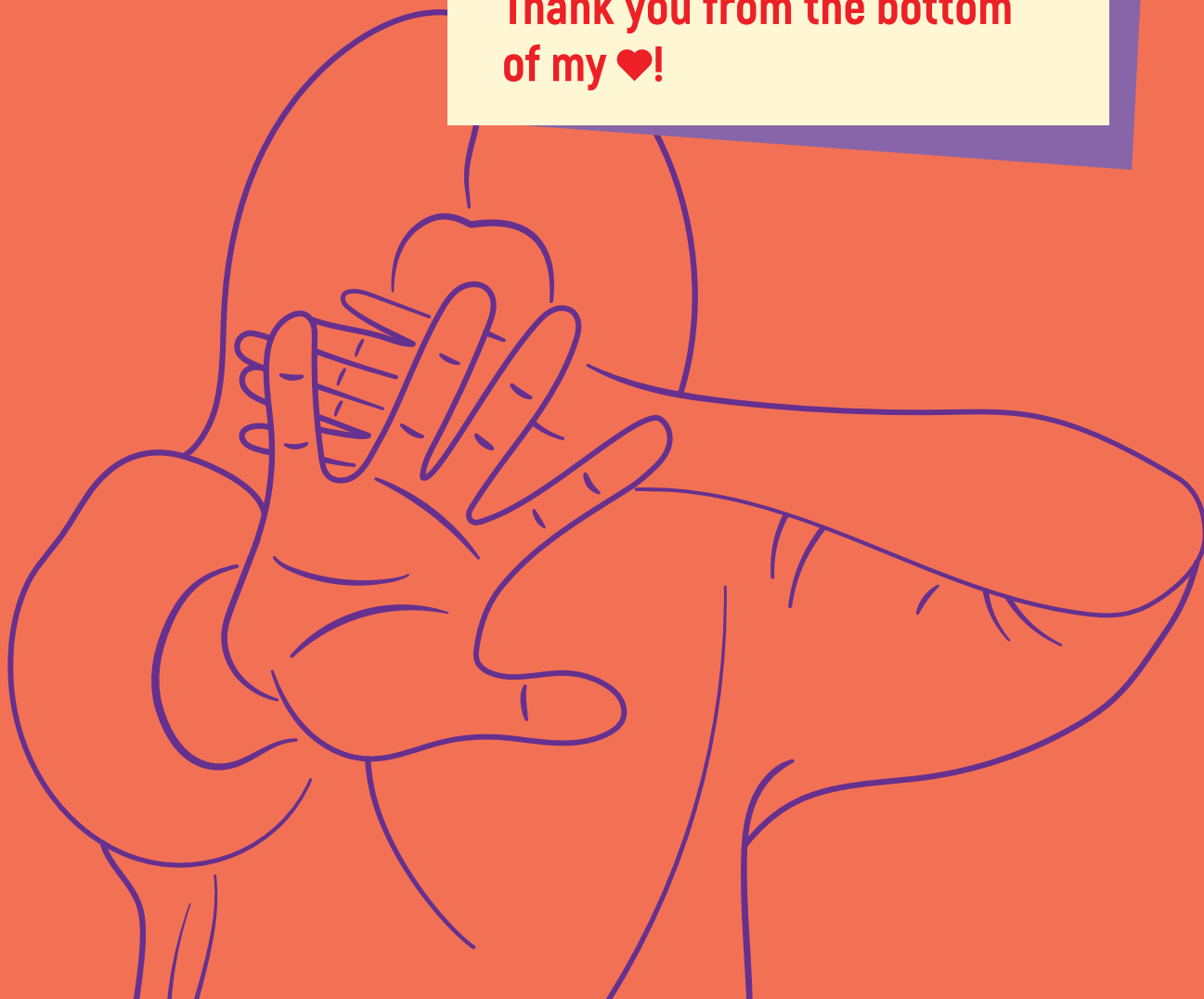
*The name is fictitious.

”

A big thank you to the entire HERA team for your help and support. Thanks to your assistance, I've become strong, brave, unrelenting and resolute; without you, I wouldn't have made it. You gave me not one, but a hundred helping hands. ♥

You rock, girls, goddesses, tigresses! I love you to the Moon and back!

Thank you from the bottom of my ♥!



CASE STUDY

MEDICAL ABORTION

Medical abortion (by taking a pill) as a safer, simpler, cheaper, but also a more intimate procedure is the most widespread pregnancy termination method in the European Union countries. Since recently, medical termination of pregnancy has become available at the University Gynaecology and Obstetrics Clinic in Skopje thanks to HERA's commitment to improving the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls, and certainly, thanks to the successful cooperation with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of North Macedonia. It is important that the medical abortion has been made available alongside the surgical intervention, meaning that women are given a choice.

This is the experience of a 37-year old, university-educated, employed patient from Ohrid. Having fulfilled her reproductive

plans by having three children, she decided that she wanted to terminate her latest pregnancy, however, she was faced with the dilemma where and how to address her need. She had never had abortions before. In consultation with her general practitioner, who explained to her all the advantages of the medical abortion, she decided to use this procedure to terminate her pregnancy, which, unfortunately, was not available in her town. Because of this, she approached the University Gynaecology and Obstetrics Clinic in Skopje, where her pregnancy was confirmed (fifth week of gestation) and she was familiarised with the full course of the procedure. Moreover, the patient was provided with informational brochure about medical abortion. At the very start, the patient expressed her satisfaction with the fact that she could undergo this procedure without having any effect on her work schedule. Her biggest concern was the fear from the unknown and the pain she was going to feel. After the successfully completed medical abortion and no abnormalities detected at the follow-up examination seven days later, the patient is satisfied with her experience, and she shares that, even though she is having some pains, she feels safe and she would recommend the procedure to other women. During the follow-up examinations, she was also provided with counselling about contraception.

Experiences like this are encouraging, but the fact remains that, as with many other women and girls who live outside of Skopje, medical abortion continues to be a remote option.



MEDICAL ABORTION

A 32-year old girl approached HERA in panic, crying that she got pregnant without planning it, and in the meantime they parted ways with her partner. She shared that she had already made up her mind not to continue the pregnancy, but she did not know where to go and what to do. Since the general gynaecologists do not have the possibility to perform this abortion, she inquired where and how she could terminate her pregnancy with pills. We referred her to the University Gynaecology and Obstetrics Clinic in Skopje which is, so far, the only facility where this healthcare service can be provided safely and legally.

Having received this service, she sent us the following email:

”

“I was so nicely welcomed at the clinic for medical abortion. The nurse and the doctor were genuinely caring. They sat me down and talked to me, they explained everything I wanted to know. After I was admitted to the clinic, they performed the ultrasonography to determine the week of gestation.

I was in a very early stage of pregnancy, 3 weeks. They gave me the abortion pills, as well as pills for nausea and pain. I went home, but they gave me their contact telephone number to call them for any questions I could have in the following days.

They give you the first pill at the clinic; after 24 hours you take the first dose of 4 pills that should provoke the abortion; after another 4 hours, you take 2 more. The first day I got no bleeding from the first pill. You place the home pills under your tongue and they take some 15-20 minutes to dissolve. The cramping started immediately, after 10 minutes, while the pills were not yet dissolved. An hour later, the bleeding started, but it was not any more profuse than the menstrual one.

After a week, I went for another ultrasonography, and they found the pregnancy was successfully terminated. I had the bleeding for two weeks overall; the first week there was slightly less bleeding than on regular period, and the second week very little.




At the clinic they also gave me contraception pills, and advised me how to further protect myself and plan my family. I am indeed very satisfied with the way the personnel treated me throughout the whole procedure, and with the support they gave me.”

4

MEDIA AND CAMPAIGNS



HERA ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA

	y e a r 2020	y e a r 2021
 Facebook (supporters)	19.491	20.246
 Twitter (followers)	1.890	1.931
 Youtube (views)	62.800	15.800

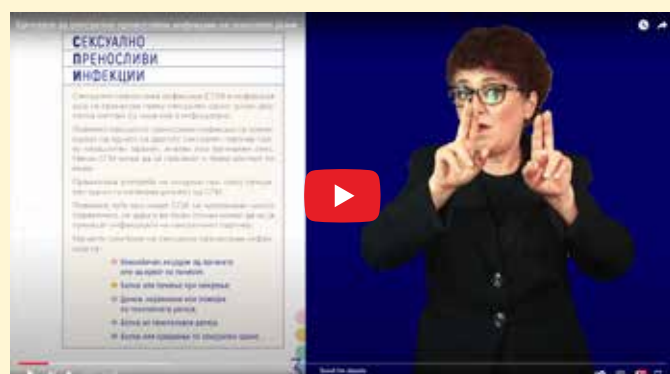
PUBLICATIONS



Brochure:
Why is it that you should know about the First Family Centre?



Brochure:
What is it that you should know about sexually transmitted infections?

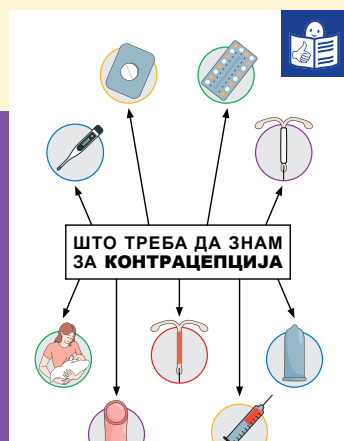


Brochure:
What is it that you should know about the sexually transmitted infections?

sign language



Brochure:
Contraception methods



Brochure:
Contraception methods

easy read format



Brochure:
Contraception methods

sign language

СЕ ШТО Е ВАЖНО ДА ЗНАЕШ
ЗА САМОТЕСТИРАЊЕТО
ЗА ХИВ



Brochure:
[Everything you need to know
about HIV self-testing](#)

МЕДИКАМЕНТОЗЕН
абортус



Brochure:
[What is it that you should know
about medical abortion?](#)

ССО нѐ учи за
ЗДРАВЈЕ



КРЕНИ рака
образовен квалитет

Brochure:
[CSE teaches us about health](#)

ВРАБОТЕНА РОМКА -
СИЛНА РОМКА
КРАТОК ОСВРТ

Brief:
[An employed Roma woman – a
strong Roma woman](#)

ДОКУМЕНТ
ЗА ЈАВНИ
ПОЛИТИКИ

Насилството врз ЛГБТИ
младите е невидливо
за стручните служби во
училиштата во Скопје

Public policy document:
[Violence against young LGBTI people
is invisible to the the non-teaching
professionals in Skopje schools](#)

ЕФЕКТИ ОД
СПРОВЕДЕНИ
ВРСНИЧКИ
ЕДУКАЦИИ
ОД СЕОПФАТНО
СЕКСУАЛНО
ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ

извештај

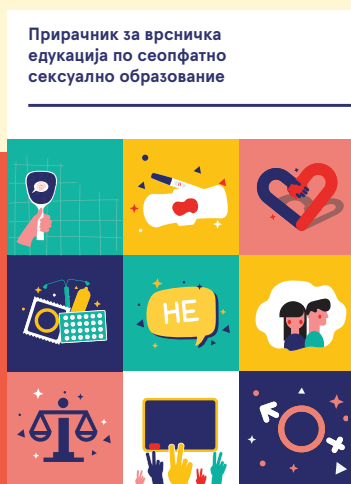
[Effects from the provided peer
education about comprehensive
sexuality education](#)



Research:
Usage rate of the social
and child protection rights
by the Roma community



REPORT on the monitoring of the
implementation of the Action Plan
for the implementation of the Convention
on Preventing and Combating Violence
against Women and Domestic Violence



Handbook for peer
educators for comprehensive
sexuality education

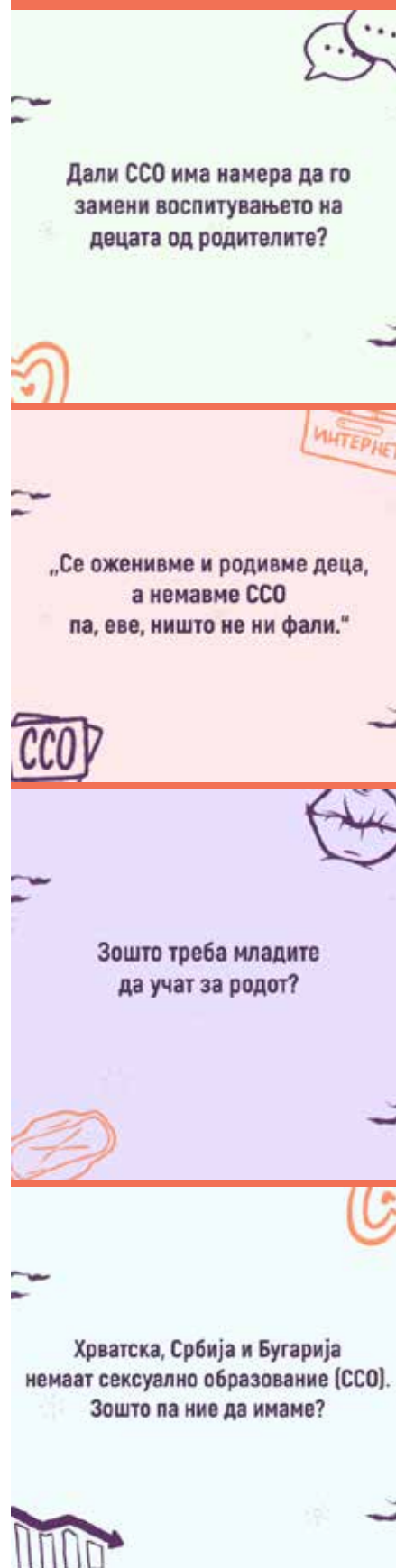


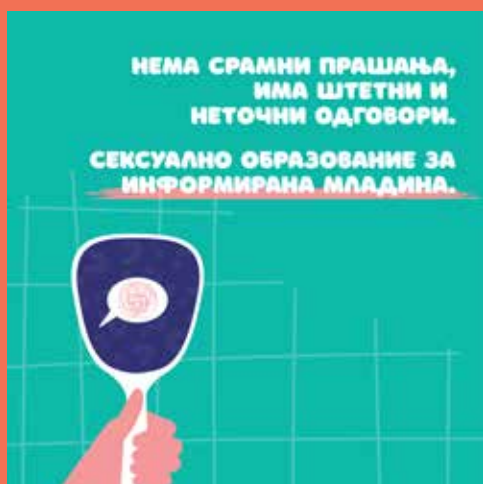
Handbook for service providers
in counseling centers for
victims of violence

CAMPAIGNS

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION: QUESTIONS, ANSWERS, CAMPAIGNS AND A BRAND NEW WEBSITE

There is no such thing as stupid questions, there are only incorrect answers. Especially when we talk about sexuality education. This is exactly why we gathered together the frequently asked questions about comprehensive sexuality education and we [provided the answers](#) – starting with *Why do we need CSE and what does it teach?* and *What are the experiences with CSE in Europe?*, and coming down to questions related to the very piloting and to the materials and illustrations used. Click [here](#) if you want to know whether CSE intends to replace the parents in how they raise their children, why we should have CSE when other countries do not, and whether CSE teaches the children to become homosexuals.





In order to bring closer the benefits offered by comprehensive sexuality education when it is taught in schools, and wishing to expose the lies circulating the social media, we conducted the campaign [“Sexuality education teaches us about health”](#) and we dedicated one banner each to all seven components it covers.

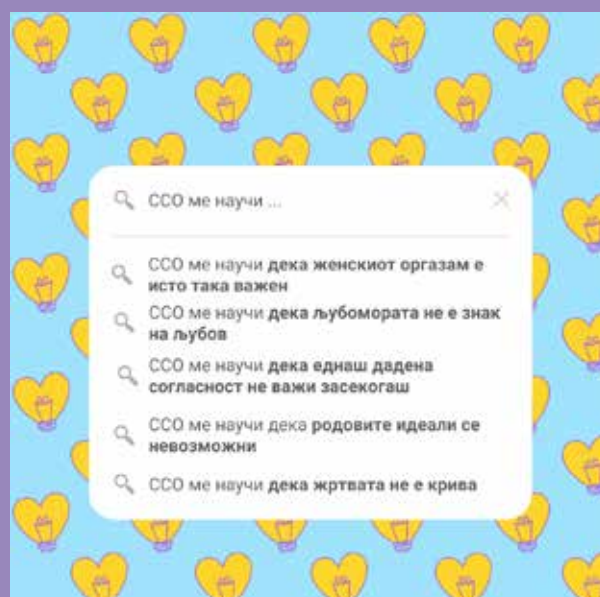
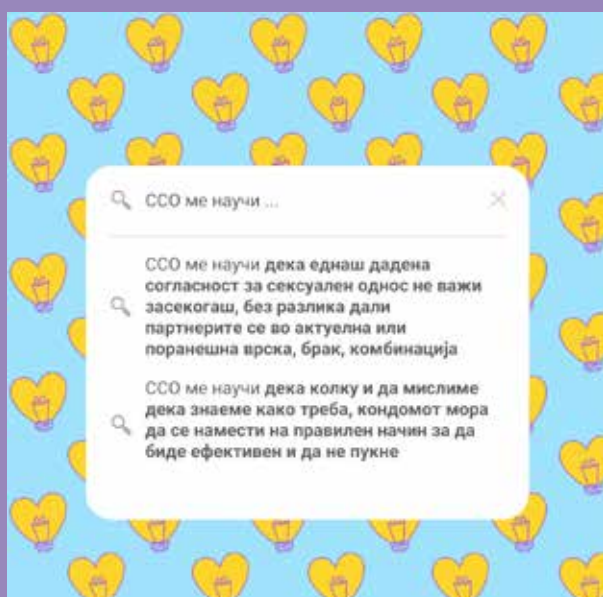
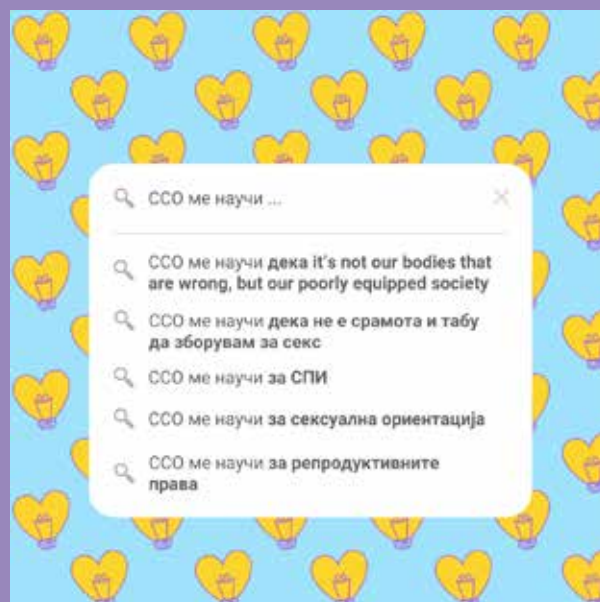
Moreover, we provided schoolbags and USB drives to all pupils involved in the comprehensive sexuality education pilot project – they will surely find them useful, as they will the knowledge acquired in the CSE classes!



Young people are the ones who need **#CSEatSchool** the most. This, unfortunately, was confirmed to us with the experience we had acquired from the informal peer education and the direct communication with the young people. And yet,

seldom anyone remembers to ask them what their needs and experiences are.

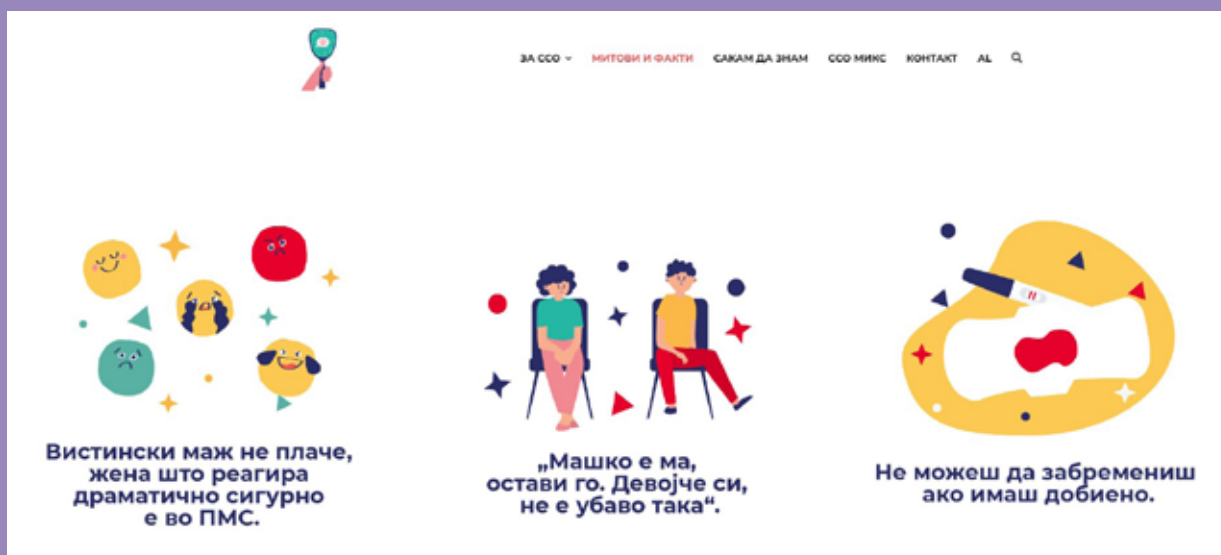
CSE taught me is a campaign running on Instagram exactly with their answers to the question “What did you learn from CSE?”. Here is a tiny part:



Finally, we can boast the first website dedicated to comprehensive sexuality education in the country! Go to seksualnoobrazovanie.mk not only to find the answers to the frequently asked questions about CSE, but also the correct information about all seven components it includes!



You can browse through the [CSE alphabet](#) or the [Myths & facts](#) about sexual and reproductive health. Young people who wish to learn even more can find their answers from [our CSE educator](#), in a CSE training or in our "I Want To Know" Youth Centres. And those who wish to expand their views and chat on CSE-related topics are free to join our youth group, called #HERA youth, in their [Sexy Neighbourhood](#), in the [Feminist Book Club](#), or they can even write columns!



EUROPEAN TESTING WEEK WITH HIV- POSITIVE STORIES

From 31st May to 7th June, together with the Association for Support of People Living with HIV "[Stronger Together](#)", we marked the European Testing Week under the title "[HIV-positive stories: Living my life in full colour](#)".

During the campaign we shared [true stories about people living with HIV](#) in Macedonia – [seven personal experience](#) contradicting the prevailing opinions that living with HIV is necessarily linked to being ill and suffering – hoping that they will contribute to changing the public perception of people living with HIV and to promoting the care for personal sexual and reproductive health.



**ХИВ
ПОЗИТИВНИ
ПРИКАЗНИ**

Европска недела на
тестирање за ХИВ
31 мај - 7 јуни 2021

ЗАЕДНО
ПОСИЛНИ





What makes all these stories positive is the fact that their protagonists have found out their HIV-positive status and started taking their antiretroviral therapy regularly, supported by the healthcare professionals and associations dealing with the issue of HIV.



SAFE ABORTION CONSTITUTES A PRIMARY HEALTHCARE CONCERN - FULL STOP!

Aware of the fact that little is known about medical abortion in our country, and even less about how it is administered in practice, we marked the International Safe Abortion Day, 28th September, with a discussion in the Youth Cultural Centre on the topic of "Medical abortion in Macedonia: expectations and reality".



Ana Daneva-Markova, M.D.; Nada Tofoska, social worker; and Bojan Jovanovski, Executive Director of HERA, talked about the global trends, especially in a situation of pandemic; about the ways in which the medical abortion is performed; about the challenges that make it still unavailable in the whole country; as well as about the experiences of the women who have already used this healthcare service in our country.

Introducing the medical abortion, commonly referred to as "abortion with pills", was one of the key amendments made to the new Law on Termination of Pregnancy, adopted in June 2019. In this way, girls and women in our country have finally been given an alternative method to terminate their pregnancy, in addition to the already existing surgical abortion.





28th SEPT
INTERNATIONAL SAFE ABORTION DAY

Messages of *support* for people who had an abortion.

Силно веруваме дека секоја жена треба сама да одлучува за своето здравје.

Не си сама. Ако ти треба, тука сме.

ХЕРА – Асоцијација за здравствена едукација и истрикување

Messages of *love* for people who had an abortion.

Знам дека не ти беше лесно да чекаш три дена за абортус. И дека поголема физичка болка не си доживеала. И дека никогаш нема да заборавиш кога сестрата ти кажа дека самата си си крива. И дека ти фалеше и повеќе грижа на клиника и повеќе љубов од твоите. Ама види се, осум години подоцна, ти си уште посилна, со куп соништа и иако држиш два пара детски раце, знаеш колку е важно секоја да може да направи абортус ако ѝ треба. Те сакам.


Порака на жена што направила абортус до самата себе



Messages of *compassion* for people who had an abortion.

Само твојата причина се важи - која и да е. Во мојата поддршка не се сомневај.

Андреа, Скопје



On the social media, we disseminated messages of understanding and support for those who have had an abortion, convinced that these messages will not only reach them, but also the ones who feel they have the right to comment and lobby for the restriction of other people's reproductive freedom!

AN EMPLOYED ROMA WOMAN IS AN INDEPENDENT ROMA WOMAN

In an attempt to encourage the young Roma women and motivate the policy-makers and decision-makers to finally roll up their sleeves and truly improve the employment opportunities for Roma women in our country, we have produced three video clips presenting segments of the life stories of three successful Roma women in Macedonia.

All three of the stories – the one of the doctor [Afrodita Berat Huseini](#), whose parents are the first Roma doctors in Macedonia; and the one of [Lolita Hasani](#), who builds her career now in Brussels; and the one of [Bajsa Arifovska](#), whose fingers can play a number of instruments – convey the message that parents' support is of crucial importance and that education is more important than a (teenage) marriage. Also, these stories have undeniably confirmed that, when people are not facing discrimination, the chances of making their dreams come true become even greater!



HERA – the target of organised attacks by the antifeminist movement and political parties

Short overview of the challenges and the success

In late 2020, and particularly in early 2021, when the Ministry of Education and Science announced the new education reform, which aimed to position the gender equality as a key national standard in education, among other things, by introducing the comprehensive sexuality education as an elective subject in primary schools, we became witnesses of the so-called antifeminist movement intensifying in the country, led by several seemingly well-meaning and seemingly volunteering organisations of parents and informal initiatives.

That this was a local manifestation of a global phenomenon spreading for over a decade now across Europe and America, and recently in Africa, too, became evident after the continuous attacks against our organisation, employing the same old arguments and strategies, including incorrect translations of international documents.

Denigration of HERA was officially launched in a column by a conservative political party called “Integra”, where a range of disinformation and lies was unfolded to maliciously spread the hatred against sexuality education in the public space. A year after the [reaction by HERA](#), “Integra” joined the Coalition for Protection of Children, with the leader among them – the association “Od nas za nas” [From us – for us]. Even though this and similar associations present themselves as children’s rights defenders, their posts about comprehensive sexuality education spew xenophobia, racism and intolerance, and are based on conspiracy theories, consequently putting the public health at risk, and violating the children’s right to gain access to accurate information, and to knowledge and skills, that will enable them to stay safer and healthier in the future.

This is exactly why last year, together with the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and the Coalition “Margins”, [we filed a criminal complaint](#) for inciting hatred and discrimination on several grounds. Independently, we filed a civil liability complaint for insult and defamation, pursuant to which the Basic Civil Court in Skopje ruled that [“Od nas za nas” is guilty for](#)

defamation committed against HERA and ordered them to retract all the contested contents.

After the support they had received from several public figures and the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the antifeminist initiative was literally placed in the spotlight on the TV Alfa news, in a segment that again spread false information, damaging the reputation not only of HERA, but also of the entire process of introducing the sexuality education as an elective subject in the 9th grade, intentionally neglecting the significance of this education for the personal, emotional and psychosocial development of young people. The television published our full rebuttal only after the Agency for Audio and Audio-Visual Media Services found infraction of the legal provisions by this medium. That this TV segment is unobjective and contains unverified information was also the opinion of the Council of Media Ethics, who established that TV Alfa has violated the Code of Journalists.

One year later, TV Alfa is still the only media outlet regularly providing space to the paranoia and the untruths of the antifeminist organisations, with their most frequent guest being exactly a person in relation to whom the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination has given an opinion that this person has committed continuous and multiple harassment on the social networking service Facebook, thus inciting hatred against a particular marginalised group in the society.

Finally, the end of the year was marked by the announcements of the political party “Levica” to renew the “desorosisation” process, which, according to the Network for Protection against Discrimination, is reminiscent of the former regime and constitutes a threat to the basic human rights. Delegitimisation of the civil sector started with our exclusion from the local policy building in the Municipality of Karpoš, which is why we sent a strong reaction against the untrue information arbitrarily propounded by the President of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Council of the Municipality of Karpoš, otherwise representative of “Levica”. Unfortunately, these lies, reinforced with lies about our alleged involvement in activities of the Municipality of Aerodrom, as well as the online hate speech, turned into attacks and threats against the lives of our employees. The case remains open.

Taking an account of everything said above, as well as the fact that antifeminist protagonists and opponents to the comprehensive sexuality education cannot fight for their cause without using lies and hate speech, and without further reinforcing the stigma and stereotypes about their fellow-citizens – from whom they want to differ so much, even though they share the same needs – it is high time that at least hate speech was explicitly acknowledged in our Criminal Code. Maybe then the responsible authorities will take a break from doing nothing, in expectation of an offence to be committed triggered by hate.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

REVENUES

A total of

41,476,169
d e n a r s

were raised in
revenues,
which is

6,5 %
higher than
in **2020**

Thereby:

→ Revenues
from state
institutions
and local
self-
government
were
increased by
20 %
compared
to 2020.

→ A total of
29,369,178
d e n a r s
of the revenues
were raised
from grants and
donations from
international
sources.

→ Revenues from
own funding,
which come
from the social
enterprise "Nega
Plus", were also
increased

426,704
d e n a r s

in 2021,
marking a

32 %
increase
compared
to 2020.

MANAGERIAL STRUCTURES AND INTERNAL REGULATIONS

→ We have also
evaluated our
achievements
stipulated in the
organisation's
Strategic
Framework
2018-2022.

DONORS

BILATERAL DONORS	920.927,00
Embassy of France to Macedonia	182.927,00
Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark / Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection of Austria	738.000,00
INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS	24.369.362,00
International Planned Parenthood Federation	10.679.861,00
Foundation Open Society – Macedonia	1.797.188,00
Kvinna till Kvinna	2.148.314,00
Foundation Bilitis	1.197.000,00
Austrian Family Planning Association	214.900,00
Sigrid Rausing Trust	7.197.440,00
Alliance for Public Health	1.134.659,00
MULTILATERAL AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS	4.078.832,00
UN Women	3.491.058,00
S-case	356.791,00
EU Delegation	230.983,00
PRIVATE SECTOR	71.300,00
Surecheck	61.300,00
Makmedika	10.000,00
GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS	11.590.053,00
Ministry of Health	9.643.303,00
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	446.750,00
City of Skopje	1.500.000,00
REVENUE FROM ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES	426.704,00
MEMBERSHIP FEE	18.934,00

EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY	MKD	USD	%
Salaries to employees	12.397.736,00	228.010,21	34,85
Medical supplies	889.399,00	16.357,18	2,50
Office supplies and equipment	1.074.891,00	19.768,62	3,02
Travel costs	1.498.376,00	27.557,05	4,21
Communication services costs	323.293,00	5.945,77	0,91
Remuneration fees for service providers	6.097.380,00	112.138,61	17,14
Running costs	1.085.376,00	19.961,45	3,05
Bank commissions	70.577,00	1.298,00	0,20
Printing and photocopying	848.648,00	15.607,72	2,39
Medical tests and analysis	1.015.450,00	18.675,42	2,85
Advertising	160.818,00	2.957,65	0,45
Maintenance of IT equipment and vehicles	435.860,00	8.016,02	1,23
Hotel services and refreshments	2.135.397,00	39.272,68	6,00
Educational and promotional materials	163.000,00	2.997,78	0,46
Funds transferred to other entities	135.000,00	2.482,82	0,38
Donations to physical and legal persons	160.875,00	2.958,70	0,45
Membership fees, participation fees	262.219,00	4.822,54	0,74
Audit	177.000,00	3.255,26	0,5
Corporate/property tax	6.191,00	113,86	0,02
Refunds to donors	99.505,00	1.830,02	0,28
Purchase of vehicles	389.655,00	7.166,25	1,1
Lawyers' fees (for clients)	136.055,00	2.502,23	0,38
Additional income for employees	574.655,00	10.568,64	1,62
Rent	470.859,00	8.659,70	1,32
Other costs	1.042.521,00	19.173,29	2,93
Consultancy services	3.919.752,00	72.089,25	11,02
	35.570.488,00	654.186,74	

