

# DECLARATION

## With sexuality education in schools to a healthier and safer youth

*“Comprehensive sexuality education will equip the young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to realise their health, wellbeing and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own wellbeing and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights related to sexual and reproductive health.”*

UNESCO, 2018

Considering that the number of adolescent births in the Republic of North Macedonia is almost three times higher than that of the European Union countries<sup>1</sup>;

Aware that the young people in our country report having their first sexual intercourse at a relatively younger age than their peers from the Western European countries<sup>2</sup>;

Considering that the Republic of North Macedonia is among the last-ranking countries in Europe when it comes to using modern contraceptives, where only 14% of the young people aged between 20 and 24 use any of the modern contraceptive methods, whereas majority of them (36%) relying on interruption of the sexual intercourse as a method of protecting themselves from unintended pregnancy<sup>3</sup>;

Aware that 52% of our girls aged 15 and 29% of our boys of the same age experience a number of psychosomatic symptoms simultaneously, several times a week<sup>4</sup>;

Aware that 50% of the young people aged 15 attending Albanian language classes and 25% of the young people attending Macedonian language classes accept the traditional gender roles, for example, that the man should be an authority in the family, whereas the woman should be guided towards becoming a good mother and wife, at the expense of advancing in her career<sup>5</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> Clark, S. et al. (2019). UNFPA Country Programme Evaluation Report Period covered by the evaluation: (2012-2018)- The Republic of North Macedonia, UNFPA

<sup>2</sup> Velić-Stefanovska, V. et al. (2017). Report from the behavioural study on HIV / AIDS / STI and SRH in young people in the Republic of Macedonia in 2017. Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Macedonia] [ph.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Mladi-2018.pdf](http://ph.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Mladi-2018.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2018-2019, State Statistical Office, UNFPA & UNICEF

<sup>4</sup> Kostarova-Unkovska, L., Do we have a winner? Gender inequalities in the health and life perspectives of adolescents in North Macedonia. Study findings – Health-related behaviour among school-aged children (11, 13 and 15 years) HBSCM [http://coalition.org.mk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/margini\\_neednakvosti\\_final.pdf](http://coalition.org.mk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/margini_neednakvosti_final.pdf)

# DECLARATION

---

Aware that in the Republic of North Macedonia the young people aged between 15 and 18 are most exposed to violence, unlike other age groups in the country<sup>6</sup>, and that the young people belonging to the LGBTI community are up to four times more harassed in schools than their heterosexual peers<sup>7</sup>;

---

Drawing attention to the fact that international human rights documents, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child recommend to all countries introducing sexuality education in primary and secondary education so as to ensure the fundamental individual rights to life, health, non-discrimination, education and information;

---

Taking account of the specific recommendations to the Republic of North Macedonia by the United Nation's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2016)<sup>8</sup> and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2018)<sup>9</sup> to ensure that "adolescents have access to accurate information about their sexual and reproductive health and rights in schools..." and "to integrate into the school curricula mandatory, age-appropriate sexuality education, and to ensure that teachers play a substantial role in combating gender stereotypes";

---

Taking account of the national commitments of the Republic of North Macedonia for introducing comprehensive sexuality education given at the Nairobi Summit (2019) and the Paris Generation Equality Forum (2021), so as to ensure substantial and long-term protection of the young people's health and wellbeing;

---

Considering that the national policies and laws of the Republic of North Macedonia, including the National Youth Strategy 2016-2025, the National Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026, the Law on the Prevention of and the Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and the Concept Note on Primary Education, recognise the need for improving the curricula on sexual and reproductive health and for introducing comprehensive sexuality education in the education system;

---

Ultimately, welcoming the decision by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted at the 162nd session to introduce a pilot programme on comprehensive sexuality education in the 9th grade of primary education, in compliance with the information presented by the Ministry of Education and Science;

---

<sup>7</sup> Kostarova-Unkovska, L., Do we have a winner? Gender inequalities in the health and life perspectives of adolescents in North Macedonia. Study findings – Health-related behaviour among school-aged children (11, 13 and 15 years) HBSCM [http://coalition.org.mk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/margini\\_neednakvosti\\_final.pdf](http://coalition.org.mk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/margini_neednakvosti_final.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> OSCE – Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. 2019. A study by OSCE into the violence against women in North Macedonia.

<sup>8,9</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. 2016. Concluding observations on the combined second to fourth periodic reports of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

# DECLARATION

---

But also emphasising the concern about the growing dissemination of false and manipulative contents in the public space against sexuality education, which hampers the opportunity, by introducing comprehensive sexuality education, to improve the wellbeing of children, and which reinforces the gender stereotypes and encourages a greater hatred and discrimination against women and other vulnerable groups of citizens in the country, uncommon in a democratic and inclusive society;

---

We, the undersigned professional associations and organisations, request from the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and from the Ministry of Education and Science, in compliance with the political commitments made and their competences, to make sure that every child in the country can enjoy their right to comprehensive sexuality education and acquire the right knowledge, attitudes and skills for protecting their health, wellbeing and dignity, including:

- To introduce the comprehensive sexuality education as an optional subject for 9th-grade pupils in the primary education, grounded in scientific and medical facts and age-appropriate, in compliance with the Concept Note on Primary Education concerning the Gender-Sensitive and Inclusive Education;
- To organise and conduct information campaigns aimed at public awareness raising about health, emotional and social benefits for children from receiving comprehensive sexuality education;
- To continuously invest in the knowledge and skills of primary school teachers so as to be able to efficiently teach the optional subject on comprehensive sexuality education;
- To design dedicated and inclusive programmes and mechanisms for protecting the children in primary and secondary schools from violence and discrimination.

# SIGNATORIES

Association of Social Workers of Macedonia  
(ASWM)



Association of Albanian Medical Doctors of Macedonia



Association of General Practitioners/Family Physicians



Institute of Marriage, Family and Systemic Practice – “Alternative”



Coalition “Margins”



Macedonian Association of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (MAGO)



Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA)



Macedonian Medical Society – MLD and Professional & Specialist Associations of MLD



Psychological Centre “Alternative”



Federation of Special Educators and Rehabilitators of the Republic of North Macedonia



Subversive Front



HERA - Health Education and Research Association



Helsinki Committee for Human Rights



Centre for Psychosocial and Crisis Action – “Malinska”



Centre for Family Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine in Skopje

