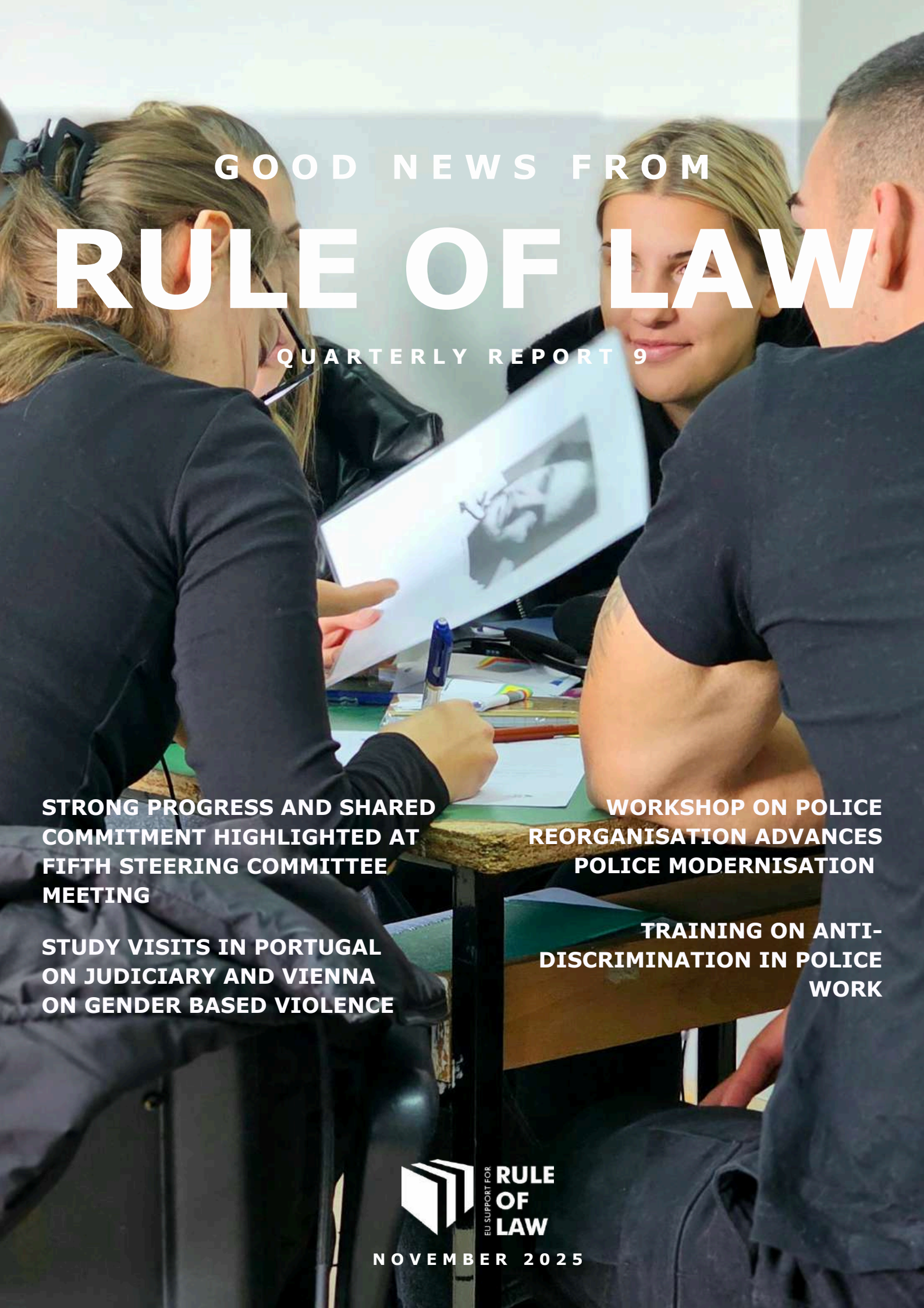


GOOD NEWS FROM

RULE OF LAW

QUARTERLY REPORT 9

STRONG PROGRESS AND SHARED COMMITMENT HIGHLIGHTED AT FIFTH STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

STUDY VISITS IN PORTUGAL ON JUDICIARY AND VIENNA ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

WORKSHOP ON POLICE REORGANISATION ADVANCES POLICE MODERNISATION

TRAINING ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION IN POLICE WORK

EU SUPPORT FOR RULE OF LAW

NOVEMBER 2025

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FOREWORD



Dieter SCHINDLAUER

Team Leader, EU Support for Rule of Law

"We use this publication to keep up a good spirit and uphold an ethic of belief in the good reason for change, reform, and a continuous improvement process. To do so, we will show steps forward and celebrate them so that they are not lost in the much more dominant noise of disheartening news."

Dear reader,

our ninth quarterly report is extending beyond the borders of North Macedonia, as we have a big section on three recent study visits – two to Portugal and one to Austria. Study visits offer a chance to step away from daily work routines and engage in experiences that are both exciting and inspiring. I believe the visits described in this edition are a great example of this. They have been filled with activities, including meetings, intensive discussions, presentations, and deliberations. The reports show that they were also successful in the sense that the participants took with them a bucket full of ideas on how to improve the areas they are responsible for in this country. This is the whole point: The experience of what is perceived as good practice in one EU member state is just the start. The hard work then starts with defining whether and how the learnings can be transformed and transposed into the reality and future of North Macedonia. I am sure that the study visits are a valid and fruitful motor for such change.

Another story in this report that I am personally very happy and even proud about is the “Mega-training” of over 400 police cadets in Idrizovo.

FOREWORD

For five days, a team of six trainers was working with the Police Training Centre and its cadets in three parallel groups. We addressed issues of impartiality, equity of service, prejudice and stereotypes – issues that are not easy to deal with but are so crucial for all law enforcement professionals on the planet. The atmosphere was outstanding - a benevolent mixture of discipline and openness, of welcoming and demanding. In this report, you will find the authentic review of four of the trained cadets on how they perceived the training to give you an impression of what we have been dealing with. I extend my gratitude to the responsible persons within the MoI Training Centre, with special thanks to Mrs Daniela Spasovska, Head of Unit for Curriculum Development, and the cadets who provided their personal views for this report, Angela Taneska, Ivana Miloshevska, Angel Mladenovski, and Damjan Dimovski. And to all the participating cadets: thank you for your active and respectful participation and the dedication you showed!

Another big event related to the MoI and the police was the high-level workshop on police reorganisation held on 21 October in Skopje. It was dedicated to rethinking internal structures to enhance communication and efficiency. This is an encouraging signal for modernisation.

In the same period, our experts on probation have visited the probation offices in Skopje, Tetovo and Kumanovo to work hands-on with the probation officers there and collect their views and inputs on strategic choices and challenges. As before, our experts were impressed by the high level of motivation and professional curiosity they met during their visits, and they will come back to visit seven more regional probation offices.

Enjoy the good news!



Dieter Schindlauer
Team Leader

MAY WE PRESENT:

TRAINING ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION IN POLICE WORK

Over 400 future police candidates participated in a combination of theoretical and practical exercises aimed at discussing, analysing, and learning how to recognise and prevent discrimination in their daily work.

STUDY VISITS

Judicial study visits to Lisbon focused on advancing European standards in judicial accountability and evaluation, as well as a study visit in Vienna aimed at strengthening policies and protection frameworks for gender-based violence.

WORKSHOP ON POLICE REORGANISATION ADVANCES POLICE MODERNISATION

The event provided an excellent opportunity to exchange experiences, learn from good European practices, and discuss the challenges and opportunities in the ongoing transformation of the Macedonian police.

Let's talk about...

- Strong progress and shared commitment highlighted at the fifth steering committee meeting
- Young police candidates embrace the vital lesson of equal treatment: “Discrimination is not always visible; often, it is ingrained in our subconscious.”
- Tabletop exercise on countering terrorism strengthens the crisis response readiness of the Macedonian Police
- Peer-to-Peer Mission to the Regional Probation Offices
- Workshop on police reorganisation gathers key stakeholders to advance modernisation of the Macedonian Police
- Study visits:
  - Judicial study visit to Lisbon: Paving the way for European standards in judicial accountability and evaluation
  - Enhancing gender based violence policy and protection framework through study visit insights
  - Strengthening the efficiency of the prosecution service of the Republic of North Macedonia – enhancing operational capacities of the Public Prosecution Office and the Council of Public Prosecutors

Strong progress and shared commitment highlighted at the fifth Steering Committee Meeting

The EU Support for Rule of Law project held its fifth Steering Committee Meeting on 18 September 2025 at the premises of the Members of Parliament Club. The meeting focused on presenting project results from February to August 2025 and outlining the next steps.

Ms Marzia Palotta, representative of the Delegation of the European Union to North Macedonia (DEU), highlighted the EU's continued support for reforms in the rule of law sector, noting the good progress made across all four project objectives and stressing the importance of ongoing dialogue with the project team and beneficiaries. Ms Agnes Taibl, Project Director from the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Fundamental and Human Rights, underlined that two-thirds of the planned outputs are already delivered or close to completion, confirming the project is on track. Out of a 42-month duration of the project, 29 months have been implemented. She thanked the project team, beneficiary institutions, the EU Delegation, and consortium partners for their commitment and support. Team Leader Mr Dieter Schindlauer emphasised that cooperation with beneficiaries has reached a level where project experts are fully integrated as resources in day-to-day operations, a result of strong mutual trust and respect.







From August 2024 to February 2025, the project achieved substantial progress across all four components, with the following highlights representing some of its key successes.

Component 1, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, the Judicial Council, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the Academy for Public Prosecutors and Judges, strengthened the judiciary through improvements in human resource management, optimisation of the judicial map, support for new IT systems, targeted trainings, and fiscal assessments to ensure the effective implementation of the Judicial Strategy 2024–2028.



Component 2, with the Ministry of Interior as the main beneficiary, enhanced the fight against organised crime and corruption through specialised trainings, guidelines, and strategic documents, while also launching the awareness-raising campaign "0% Corruption – Let's Make It True!" to encourage citizens to report corruption without hesitation.



Component 3, together with the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC), delivered key results including the Human Resource Management System, the Crisis Communication Strategy, the IACA course, and the first draft of the ICT Strategy.



Component 4, closely cooperating with the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth, the Ombudsman Office, the Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination, and the Directorate for Execution of Sanctions, advanced human rights protection through the Human Rights Forum, Equality Talks, training of trainers on anti-discrimination, the launch of the E-resource center on equality, and the adoption of the National Action Plan on Children's Rights 2025–2029.



Representatives of partner institutions expressed their appreciation for the project's ongoing support and its valuable contribution to strengthening the rule of law.

The meeting, attended by 50 representatives from the EU Delegation, consortium partners, beneficiary institutions, and experts, underscored the shared commitment to building a more just and transparent society in North Macedonia.





Capturing Success:

A Visual Celebration











Young police candidates embrace the vital lesson of equal treatment: “Discrimination is not always visible; often, it is ingrained in our subconscious.”

Within the framework of the "EU Support for Rule of Law" project, an interactive training on anti-discrimination in police work was held with the new generation of police candidates in the Republic of North Macedonia.
This training is part of ongoing efforts to enhance the capabilities of future police officers in the areas of human rights, equal treatment, and professional ethics.

Over 400 future police candidates participated in a combination of theoretical and practical exercises aimed at discussing, analysing, and learning how to recognise and prevent discrimination in their daily work. For many, this training provided a unique opportunity to reflect on the subtle ways in which prejudices and stereotypes can influence their professional relationships with citizens.

> “The training was different from anything we have ever had before; my impression is very positive,” says Angela Taneska, one of the participants.
>
> “What I liked most was that it was not only theoretical, but also included many practical examples and discussions. I was surprised by how subtle forms of discrimination can appear in everyday work, without us immediately noticing them.”



She adds that the most important lesson she picked up was that discrimination is not always obvious or intentional.

“Sometimes it is the result of prejudices that we unconsciously carry with us. I understood that even a small action or word can have a great impact on the trust of citizens,” explains Angela.

Angel Mladenovski thinks similarly, saying that it is precisely such training that helps young police officers become more aware of the responsibility that their profession brings.

> “Discrimination can also be systemic, that is, ‘built-in’ in institutions, laws or social habits that create unequal opportunities for certain groups. That is why it is important to learn to recognise these mechanisms and to act professionally and equally towards everyone,” he says.



For Ivana Miloshevska, the most valuable thing was that the training was conducted in an interactive and positive manner.



> “The trainers were very well prepared and managed to convey the knowledge to us through play and laughter. I learned that discrimination often appears through small, unconscious actions or prejudices, and not always through open insults or hatred,” she shares.

For all participants, the most memorable moment was when everyone had to create a story/biography about different people based on a single photo. When they later found out the real story, everyone was confronted with their own assumptions and prejudices.

> “From that exercise, we learned that we should never judge people by their appearance, because everyone has their own story,” says Damjan Dimovski.



In addition to new knowledge, the candidates agreed that this training will have a direct impact on their future as police officers.

“I will be much more careful in my relationship with all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or religion,” says Angela Taneska.

“I believe that with respect and understanding, the police can become closer and more efficient.”

Participants emphasised that such trainings not only build awareness and empathy, but also strengthen the relationship between the police and citizens.

“When people feel that they are treated fairly and with respect, they cooperate more easily and have more trust in institutions,” Mladenovski emphasised.



Discrimination – recognition, understanding and responsibility

The responses from the young candidates indicate that they understand discrimination as a crucial issue in creating a fair and inclusive society. Discrimination is not always obvious or intentional; it can arise from unconscious biases or cultural habits that have been passed down through generations. As the young cadets demonstrated, the first step toward change involves understanding, empathy, and treating everyone equally.

The anti-discrimination training is part of the broader activities of the "EU Support for Rule of Law" project, aimed at strengthening the capacities of police officers and building trust with the community.









Capturing Success:

A Visual Celebration











Tabletop exercise on countering terrorism strengthens the crisis response readiness of the Macedonian Police

A Tabletop Exercise on Countering Terrorism was held in Skopje, bringing together 22 representatives from various sectors and units of the Ministry of Interior. The exercise aimed to test and verify the adequacy and coherence of existing operational plans, response frameworks, and security protocols in a simulated crisis environment.

Through realistic scenario-based discussions, participants practiced their roles and responsibilities, strengthened decision-making under pressure, and identified potential gaps in coordination, communication, and crisis management.

A debriefing session held the following day gathered 10 Heads of Sectors and Units to discuss findings, exchange solutions, and review the operational crisis response network – EuNAT, which provides a structured approach to managing complex emergencies.

The exercise reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to improving interdepartmental cooperation, strengthening preparedness, and enhancing the overall resilience of the Macedonian Police in responding to terrorism and other high-intensity security incidents.



Peer-to-Peer Mission to the Regional Probation Offices

Four international experts (IE) from the Probation Service and the judiciary in the Republic of Croatia implemented peer-to-peer capacity-building and awareness-raising missions to the probation offices of Skopje, Tetovo and Kumanovo, working with 16 probation officers.
One of the IEs, Vesna Zelić Ferenčić, Head of service for the development of the probation system at the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation of the Republic of Croatia, sees “the probation officers as highly motivated and eager to further develop their skills and professional competencies. Given their placement within the court setting, they tend to perceive themselves as subordinate to judges rather than as equal professionals, indicating a need to strengthen their professional confidence and self-perception, both individually and at the service level.

> ”The peer-to-peer missions are exactly aimed at capacity building for each probation officer and at organisational development. ISTE Matea Sršen, Head of the probation office in Zagreb I, describes her “mission to the Skopje probation office as a week full of learning, sharing, and genuine teamwork.”

During the missions, the Macedonian probation offices conducted interviews with offenders and implemented field visits to locate offenders who did not show up for interviews. Afterwards, the probation officers received extensive feedback identifying strengths and weaknesses and offering recommendations for improving interview practices by the IEs.

> Matea Sršen describes “observing real interviews and having open, constructive discussions that strengthened confidence and professional connection as the highlight. Officers appreciated the supportive atmosphere and the opportunity to exchange experiences in a relaxed, respectful way.”

> Her colleague, Vesna Zelić Ferenčić, adds that "The hands-on approach of observing how the Macedonian probation officers apply interview techniques and integrate knowledge gained from training and education has proven especially valuable."

Furthermore, Macedonian probation officers shared their feedback on the updated version of the risk assessment tool, which helps to assess and produce an appropriate approach to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. The Macedonian probation officers also had the opportunity to discuss the status of implementation of the current Strategy for the Development of the Probation Service in the Republic of North Macedonia (2021-2025) and provided suggestions for improvements in both existing and potential new areas for the next strategy.

Vesna Zelić Ferenčić points to one area to possibly further strengthen the probation service:

> "Although the regional probation offices operate uniformly in accordance with established protocols, noticeable differences exist: There are offices that are more active and demonstrate greater independence, e.g., by organising meetings with judges or engaging stakeholders. These offices seem to be more satisfied with their role within the criminal justice system. This further underscores the importance of decentralising certain activities and appointing local office managers, supported and supervised by the central office."



> Matea Sršen concludes that “the mission was also a learning experience for us as experts, offering valuable insights into the realities of probation practice and the strong commitment of the officers to their work. It showed how collaboration and peer learning can inspire motivation and pride in building a stronger probation service.”

The project will continue its motivational and professional support to the regional probation offices with peer-to-peer missions to the offices in Bitola, Kavadarci, Ohrid, Prilep, Shtip, Strumica and Veles.



Workshop on police reorganisation gathers key stakeholders to advance modernisation of the Macedonian Police

A workshop dedicated to the Reorganisation and Development of the Macedonian Police at National, Central and Regional-Local Level was held in Skopje, bringing together representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Police, and international experts. The event provided an excellent opportunity to exchange experiences, learn from good European practices, and discuss the challenges and opportunities in the ongoing transformation of the Macedonian police.

The project expert, Matjaž Jerkič, Director of the Criminal Police Directorate of the Slovenian Police, delivered a detailed presentation on the Slovenian Police structure and management model, followed by an open and dynamic discussion.





The workshop was attended by the Minister of Interior of North Macedonia, Panche Toshkovski, and the Director of the Police of North Macedonia, Aleksandar Janev.

The Minister expressed interest in how Slovenia improved efficiency through organisational streamlining, while the Director focused on the management of human resources and analytical capacities within the Criminal Police. Their engagement and in-depth questions contributed significantly to the quality of the discussion and demonstrated a genuine commitment to reform and institutional modernisation.

The workshop resulted in a shared commitment to further strengthen the analytical, organisational, and investigative functions of the police, improve cooperation between central, regional, and local levels, and invest in professional development and ethical leadership.

The event once again confirmed that sharing practical experiences and reform methodologies from EU Member States such as Slovenia can play a vital role in building a police service that is modern, efficient, and trusted by citizens.



Photos: © Ministry of interior



STUDY VISITS



Judicial study visit to Lisbon: Paving the way for European standards in judicial accountability and evaluation

Between the 14th and 16th of October, in a step towards strengthening the rule of law in North Macedonia, our Project supported a high-level Study Visit for the Judicial Council of North Macedonia (JC) to the High Judicial Council of Portugal (CSM) and the Supreme Court of Justice of Portugal in Lisbon. The delegation, which included the JC's President and 11 JC members, focused on aligning judicial evaluation and disciplinary processes with established European standards.

The visit was designed to capitalise on the reforms initiated by the recommendations of the 2023 EU Peer Review Mission on the Judicial Council and the EU Reform Agenda on North Macedonia, which are now resulting in draft amendments to the Law on the Judicial Council and a revision of the JC's Methodology for Judicial Performance Evaluation. Portugal's CSM was chosen as an appropriate partner due to its comparable institutional framework and its well-established experience in judicial appointments, evaluations, and disciplinary procedures.



Over three days, the delegations from North Macedonia and Portugal engaged in direct learning, gaining practical insights into the distinct national methodologies for judicial appointments, promotions, and performance evaluations. Senior judges and officials from the Portuguese institutions held presentations, sharing best practices on career management, ethics, and judicial quality. The visit concluded with an examination of the Supreme Court's role in the appellate procedure against the disciplinary decisions of the CSM, providing an understanding of the judicial accountability process in Portugal.



The knowledge acquired from assessing the Portuguese system will now be integrated into the JC's ongoing reforms. This includes using Portugal's model to amend the JC's Methodology for Judicial Performance Evaluation, implement the upcoming amendments to the Law on the Judicial Council concerning disciplinary procedures, and guide the JC in strengthening its own independence. The result of this collaboration is a concrete, evidence-based roadmap, geared towards modernising the JC's core functions and ensuring greater judicial accountability and public trust in North Macedonia.



Enhancing gender based violence policy and protection framework through study visit insights

Representatives of the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth (MSPDY), Centre for Social Work (CSW) and the Referral Centre for Victims of Sexual Violence participated in a study visit on “Ways of strengthening and enhancing victim protection in the area of gender-based violence” to Vienna, Austria.

The study visit promoted a gender-sensitive and victim-centred approach in developing and implementing polices and measures contributing to a comprehensive framework ensuring protection of victims and access to justice, victim support, enhanced data collection, prevention, coordination and cooperation. The learnings of the study visit will be especially useful for the MSPDY for developing and implementing a new National Strategy for Prevention and Protection from Gender-Based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2026–2033, and for the work of the re-established National Coordination Body for Implementing the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.



Key practical take aways from the study visit:

Disseminate knowledge: Share the acquired knowledge and good practices in GBV and DV prevention with all relevant professionals and stakeholders working in the field in North Macedonia.

Policy integration: Integrate proven prevention and support measures—such as social housing programs for GBV survivors practised in Vienna—into the Macedonian National GBV Strategy.

Institutional Reform: Explore the possibility of establishing a dedicated governmental body (e.g., Ministry for Women or Women's Affairs) to ensure coordinated and strategic work on gender equality and GBV prevention.

Model testing through EU funds: Utilise insights on specialised services for children and youth to design and pilot comparable models in North Macedonia, supported through IPA and other EU programs.

Key practical take aways from the study visit:

Engage men as allies: Increase the involvement of men in GBV prevention initiatives, including awareness campaigns targeting men and boys. Develop and implement school- and community-based programs focused on working with boys and young men to prevent future violence.

Violence prevention programs for youth: Introduce improved, professional, and trauma-informed services and procedures for child victims of sexual violence. Develop project concepts for establishing centres for early intervention and prevention for child victims of violence.

Service models adaptation: Use the insights from international services to adapt and introduce sustainable, survivor-centred support models in North Macedonia.

Helpline system improvement: Improve and expand the network of helplines for women and girls who are survivors of violence, ensuring accessibility and quality.

Strengthening the efficiency of the prosecution service of the Republic of North Macedonia – enhancing operational capacities of the Public Prosecution Office and the Council of Public Prosecutors

From 14 to 16 October, within the framework of our project, representatives of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Council of Public Prosecutors, and the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors participated in a study visit to Lisbon, Portugal.
The objective of the visit was to enable participants to gain insight into the legal framework, day-to-day operations, and functioning of the Council of Public Prosecutors, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors in another EU Member State.

During the visit to the Portuguese Public Prosecutor's Office and the High Council of Public Prosecutors, the delegation was introduced to the legal framework and organisational structure of the prosecution system in Portugal, with a particular focus on the financing and independence of the prosecutorial system, transparency of procedures, as well as the evaluation and supervision mechanisms for public prosecutors. They were also acquainted with the specific system for performance evaluation and oversight through presentations delivered by a prosecutor responsible for these processes, which are key for career development.



The participants additionally visited the specialised Public Prosecutor's Office for Investigations in Lisbon, where Director Maria de Lourdes Parada presented the electronic case-management system. Considering that the development of a new IT system for the Public Prosecutor's Office in North Macedonia is currently ongoing, the practical tools and functionalities demonstrated were of particular importance.



Throughout the study visit, several institutional and criminal-law aspects were discussed, including the application of the Criminal Procedure Code and cooperation with other state authorities. This specialised prosecution office handles the most serious and complex cases in Portugal, including the investigation of the recent accident involving the Portuguese cable car "Glória".

At the Academy for Legal Studies in Lisbon, the participants discussed and exchanged experiences regarding competencies, organisational structure, funding, and programs for initial and continuous training of public prosecutors.

The study visit provided a valuable opportunity for direct exchange of views and practical knowledge on the organisation of the prosecution system and the role of public prosecutors, with a particular focus on challenges that may affect the independence of the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Council of Public Prosecutors.

Through these meetings, presentations, and discussions, the participants will be able to transfer and apply the best standards, experiences, and practices in their daily work, as well as contribute to the development of new legal solutions in line with the highest international standards and practices.



NOVEMBER 2025 - FEBRUARY 2026

CALENDAR
UPCOMING EVENTS

22 JAN

Promotion of the Report on the Implementation of the Human Resources Strategy in the Judiciary and the new Roadmap for the Organization of the Judicial Network

Component 1

12 NOV

Workshop on illicit drug trafficking - II session

Component 2

13 NOV

2nd Forum of Impulses: Shift from principles to practice – Shaping laws and measures through the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

Component 4

11 DEC **12 DEC**

Taining on Data Analysis and Processing

Component 3

20 NOV

Conference "Five Years of Prevention and Protection against Discrimination: Achievements and Future Directions"

Component 4

IMPRINT

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