

## REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

### Joint submission on health (Association ESE and 10 CSO's)

#### Key issues of concerns and Recommendation

##### Health status of Roma

Roma in Macedonia are facing unfavorable socio-economic and living conditions, accompanied with barriers in the access to health services which contribute towards the less favorable health status of the Roma compared to the majority of the population. In addition, the poor health status of Roma results from non-implementation of the Roma strategy (2005-2015) and National action plan for health. Roma mothers and children are insufficiently provided with preventive health care, including immunization, health education and visits by the community nurse service. The immunization coverage of Roma children accounts for 20%-90%, which is far below from the national average of 95%. Adopted activities that were aimed for improvement of mothers and children health in Roma communities are significantly reduced and not properly implemented. Gynecological clinics in small urban areas do not exist, especially in the Roma communities and there is inadequate coverage of Roma women with antenatal health care. Many Roma are facing problems in acquiring the right to health insurance as precondition for access to health care. Roma are discriminated against in the exercising of their health rights and it is manifested by denial of health services and low quality of health care. **RECOMMENDATION: The state should introduce procedure for monitoring and reporting about the implementation of measures specified in the National action plan for health and preventive health programs; foresee and implement measures for increased coverage of Roma children and women with preventive health services including vaccination and reproductive health services with adequate budget allocation. The state should introduce an efficient system for protection of the rights of Roma people, i.e. system for prevention and elimination of discrimination in health care,**

##### Health of the people living with HIV/AIDS

People living with HIV/AIDS are faced with the lack of antiretroviral therapy. The system for supplying is unsustainable and leads to delays in the procurement and exhausted reserves that further creates the risk of having the therapy terminated. Terminated therapy directly endangers the health and life of people living with HIV. Furthermore, there are no available pediatric formulations of therapy for children living with HIV in our country. **RECOMMENDATION: The state should urgently introduce appropriate mechanism for regular procurements of antiretroviral therapy in order to eliminate incidents of termination of treatment. The state should also introduce appropriate treatment for HIV infected children.**

##### Health of the LGBT population

There is a highly expressed homophobia and transphobia, evident through the numerous statements and hate speech for the LGBT population by high-ranked representatives of state institutions, the church and certain media. Thus, this situation results in inadequate treatment of these people by the health workers, as well as in distrust of these people in the health system. There are no specific health policies and programs that regulate the status, issues and problems encountered by these people. **RECOMENDATION: The state should launch awareness raising campaign that aim to reduce the level of discrimination and hate toward LGBTI people and to take appropriate legal action in order to sanction the perpetrators of discrimination. The state should undertake measures to train the medical staff and medical associates regarding the discrimination and health needs of the LGBT population.**

##### Health of drug users

Drug users, especially in Skopje are faced with limited access to the programs for addiction treatment. Assessment based on an official data from the Public Health Institute shown that more than 3.000 drug users

are not receiving the treatment. Another special problem is the inexistence of treatment for addiction of the people below the age of 16. Legal and institutional barriers restrict children under 16 in accessing drug-related treatment, rehabilitation and re-socialization. **RECOMENDATION: The state should ensure easy and safe access to treatment for the drug users in all municipalities on the territory of the City of Skopje. The state should adopt protocol for treatment of children addicted to drugs regardless of their age and launching evidence-based treatment programs for children and trained medical staff, including programs for rehabilitation and re-socialization of children**

### **Health of sexual workers**

The state has not yet provided programs and services that respond to the needs of the sex workers. In the provision of health services they are often discriminated, and depending on their gender, gender identity, health status, ethnic or social background they suffer from multiple discrimination. The most noticeable example of undermining the public health efforts of the Ministry of health and the Civil sector was in 2008 when 23 sex workers were arrested and without their consent were tested for HIV, Hepatitis and other sexually transmitted disease. **RECOMMENDATION: The state should introduce programs for social and health services that respond to the specific needs of sexual workers and undertake measures for elimination of stigma towards sexual workers which is present among health workers**

### **Women's health and health of the Victims of human trafficking**

The coverage with chosen gynecologist is lower among women from rural areas (49%). There is insufficient coverage with antenatal health care for 17% of the women that had less than four medical check-ups during their first pregnancy. There is low rate of usage of contraception by women in the reproductive period and abortion is still used as birth control method especially among married women. In addition, not a single oral hormonal contraceptive is included on the positive list of medicines of the Health insurance fund, i.e. women should pay the full price for the contraceptives. Furthermore, restriction of women's reproductive rights can also be noted most recently with the new Law on pregnancy termination that was adopted in an expedited procedure and without public consultations, which imposes administrative barriers that particularly limit access to safe abortion for women from marginalized and rural communities. As regarding the **women victims of human trafficking**, it should be mentioned that the state does not provide financial and institutional support for ensuring the health care for the victims of human trafficking. **RECOMMENDATION: The state should introduce measures to enable universal coverage of women with gynecological services in the primary health care and antenatal health care on the whole territory of the country, as well as taking measures for improving the availability of contraception, such as placing the oral hormonal contraceptives on the positive list of medicines of the health insurance fund.**

**RECOMMENDATION: The state should provide the necessary health care for the victims of human trafficking at all levels of health care.**

### **Health of the people with intellectual disability**

People with intellectual disability above 26 years of age facing limited access to free health care, treatment and medication. Furthermore the Law on health care does not allowing attendant to the person with intellectual disability during their use of hospital care above the 3 years of age. The system for assessing the specific needs of the people with physical and intellectual disability is insufficiently developed and it not includes the list of needs and recommendations for further treatment. **RECOMMENDATION: The state should foresee legal solutions to provide free of charge health care, treatment and medication for all people with intellectual disability without age limitations and based on their inability for independent life and work and to allow attendant to these persons during the hospitalization without any age limitations. The system for assessing the specific needs of the people with physical and intellectual disability should include the list of needs and recommendations for further treatment of this population.**

## List of human rights activist from R. of Macedonia representing Joint submission on health

| No. | Name                             | Represented organization  | Contact details   | Area of expertise                                    |
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| 3.  | Natasa Boskova                   | Coalition Sexual and health rights of marginalized communities<br>HOPS – Healthy Options Project Skopje | ++389 75 200 805<br><a href="mailto:boskovanat@yahoo.com">boskovanat@yahoo.com</a>  | Sexual and health rights of marginalized communities |
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