



NORTH MACEDONIA NATIONAL POLICY BRIEF

The objective of this policy brief is to present the current situation and progress made in family support on behalf of the children's rights in North Macedonia towards achieving quality standards using the quality assurance protocol for family support services implemented by the 19 countries participating in the COST Innovators Grant IG18123, QA[4]EuroFam. The aim is to provide key messages on current strengths as well as recommendations to key audiences, bringing relevant views and appraisals from the group of interdisciplinary experts, representatives of various sectors in the field at national level.

National Working Group

Consensual responses were provided by members of North Macedonian National Working Group made up of 20 researchers and coordinators of services and social entities at national, regional and local levels in social, education, health, and justice sectors.

1. Contextualization and characterization of family support in North Macedonia



Q Definition and understanding of family support: In North Macedonia, the concept of family support is not universally defined, yet it encompasses a broad spectrum of legal, cultural, and institutional elements. Legal frameworks are in place that align with European Union standards, safeguarding the rights of children and the welfare of families. Institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide a wealth of resources aimed at child development and parental support. This combination of formal and informal support systems creates a supportive environment conducive to the well-being of children and families. Family support in North Macedonia is a complex concept shaped by various factors, including demographic trends, fertility rates, and cultural, economic, and health-related dynamics.

Q Family support services in context: Family support services in North Macedonia vary widely, due to limited resources and infrastructure, as well as a lack of comprehensive family policies. Basic services and primary educational support are provided by public institutions; however, international organizations and NGOs frequently play a significant role in providing family support services. The main institutional framework on the national level is within the competencies of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Health. The field of action of Macedonian institutions includes education, violence and protection, children and youth rights, social care, health protection, people with disabilities, woman equality, and anti-discrimination.

Q Political perspective on family support: The Republic of North Macedonia, an EU candidate country, aligns its family values and policies with EU standards. Recent efforts include improving laws on social protection, child protection, and family welfare. The Social Protection Law (2019) and Child Protection Law (2000, amended in 2015) offer financial support to low-income families and children with disabilities. The Family Law (1990, amended in 2015) addresses marriage, domestic violence, and child custody, but needs further updates, especially regarding domestic violence against women. Despite progress, implementation challenges remain, particularly in protecting women from gender-based violence. Continued efforts are essential to enhance family support and legal protections.

2. Key messages from the National Strengths and Recommendations Report



Families and Children

STRENGTHS

1. Strengthening families and children involves prioritizing the best interests of the child, respecting their rights and developmental needs, and ensuring family confidentiality. Services must inform families of any reasons for confidentiality breaches, ensuring transparency and trust while taking action to support children and their families effectively.
2. There is a different palette of social allowances for low-income families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend enhancing family support by increasing funding for family-centered services, improving access to mental health resources, and ensuring consistent monitoring and evaluation. Institutions should build capacity to deliver comprehensive and effective support, ensuring they are well-equipped to address the needs of families and children.
2. Individualization of formal support, including individually family-oriented financial allowances is needed.



Professionals

STRENGTHS

1. North Macedonia offers quality family support education, including graduate and postgraduate programs within the formal education (Family Studies, Social Work and Social Policy, Psychology, Pedagogy, Special Education and Rehabilitation etc.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increasing informal and life-long learning programs as well as better coordination between academia and practitioners at the national level.



Policymakers

STRENGTHS

1. North Macedonia has ratified crucial EU-aligned conventions and declarations regarding families and children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduction of a database that links all institutions that provide family support services. Better implementation of EU-aligned declarations and conventions regarding families and children is needed.
2. Policymakers should incorporate academia, practitioners, and families in the decision-making processes.



Academics

STRENGTHS

1. Academia in North Macedonia offers different professional profiles working and researching in the field of family support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Better cooperation between academia and practitioners as well as collaboration among professionals. Transdisciplinary and holistic approach to the family support system in the country.

3. Insights and lessons learned regarding the quality of family support



1 Our assessment reveals that family support in North Macedonia is largely provided by social support institutions. This is evident from our research, showing that most assistance comes from professionals working in these organizations.

2 According to the experiences of family support professionals, most services are either isolated efforts or established within institutional policies and guidelines. However, in most cases, the implementation of these services is not adequately monitored.

3 Family support in North Macedonia is organized exclusively at the tertiary level, when serious risks in family functioning are notable. There is general a lack of primary prevention.

4 Family support receives insufficient attention from relevant stakeholders, institutions, the public, and policymakers, resulting in a lack of comprehensive strategies and coordinated efforts to address the needs and challenges faced by families.

The authors of this document are Makedonka Radulovic (Full Professor at the Institute of Family Studies, Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje), Irena Avirovic Bundalevska (Associate Professor at the Institute of Family Studies, Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje) and Angelka Keskinova (Associate Professor at the Institute of Family Studies, Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje).

The authors acknowledge to the North Macedonian National Working Group: Gordana Atanasova (Ministry of social work and social policy); Irena Avirovic (Faculty of philosophy, Institute of Family Studies); Ana Bosnjak (Ministry of social work and social policy); Elena Chehova (NGO, ESTIA-Organization for Family Protection); Elena Crvenova (High school "Vasil Antevski Dren"); Tanja Cvetkovic Daneva (Institute for Social Activities Skopje); Ana Daneva Markova (Committee on Safe Motherhood); Jasna Ercegovic (Resource center for children with special needs); Ana Filipche (Psychiatry Clinic); Mario Janchev (SOS Children's Village North Macedonia); Angelka Keskinova (Faculty of philosophy, Institute of Family Studies); Marta Markovska (Ministry of social work and social policy); Nevena Petrovska (Ministry of social work and social policy); Emilija Popova (Kindergarten 23 Avgust-Berovo); Makedonka Radulovic (Faculty of philosophy, Institute of Family Studies); Zdenka Stamenova (Institute for Social Activities Skopje); Daniela Stanojkovska (Ministry of social work and social policy); Meri Jovanovska Sviderska (Institute for Mental Health); Biljana Todorova (University „Goce Delchev, Faculty of law); Hristina Todorovska (NGO, HOPS-Option for healthy life); Volak Viktorija (DUCOR Partenija Zografski - Secondary vocational school for deaf and hard of hearing students).

This document is based upon work from COST Innovators Grant IG18123 A quality assurance protocol for family support services in Europe. An evidence-based and culturally informed model for professional practice, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. COST Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation. www.cost.eu

Any citation of this document should use the following reference:

Radulovic, M., Avirovic Bundalevska, I., Keskinova, A. (2024). *North Macedonian National Policy Brief*. EurofamNet.