

## STRATEGY FOR COMMUNICATION OF THE COUNCIL FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY 2022 – 2024

-draft -

### Introduction

The Council for Cooperation between Government and Civil Society (hereinafter: the Council) is an advisory body of the Government which aims to contribute to creating a favourable environment for the development of a sustainable civil society sector, promoting effective dialogue and cooperation with government bodies in creating and implementing public policies to improve the quality of life of citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia. The Council has 31 members, of which 15 are nominated by ministries and other public administration bodies, and 16 by the civil society sector, elected by civil society organizations through a public call (CSOs). The key tasks of the Council, as defined in the Government Decision on the establishment of the Council, include the following: i.) monitoring and analysis of public policies that affect the environment for civil society development, ii.) initiating the adoption of new or amendments to existing regulations to improve the legal and institutional framework for the operation of CSOs; giving opinions on draft laws, strategies, programs and other legal acts that refer to or influence the development and operation of the civil society sector; iv.) raising awareness and promotion of the culture of cooperation and the building of partnership relations between the government and the public administration bodies with the civil society; v.) participating in the preparation and monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy for cooperation of the Government with the civil society sector and the related Action Plan, by analysing and discussing the annual and quarterly reports on the implementation of the Strategy; vi.) monitoring and analysis of the involvement of CSOs in policymaking based on annual reports on public consultations conducted by the state administration bodies; vii.) providing proposals of priorities for financing of CSOs from the State budget based on the elaborated sectoral analysis of the responsible public administration bodies; viii.) reviews the annual government reports on the public funding of programs and projects of CSOs; ix.) designing the annual plan of its activities, x.)



adopting an annual report on its work for the previous year, and xi.) considers proposals of organizations and takes positions on issues within its competence.

The Council activities are aligned to a large extent with the Government Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of Civil Society 2022-2024, and its three main priorities: 1) legal, institutional and financial framework for civil society organization, 2) active participation of CSOs in policymaking process with special emphasis on the European integration process, 3) civil society as an actor in socio-economic development. Besides, the Council annual work plan includes additional activities which contribute to fulfilling the Council mandate.

The publicity of the work of the Council for Cooperation and Development of the Civil Society, as well as the communication and consultation of the stakeholders, are generally regulated in the Rules of Procedures of the Council. In accordance with its mandate, the Council is expected to be engaged in the raising awareness and promotion of the culture of cooperation between government and civil society. Besides, the Council members from CSOs should inform, involve and consult the interested stakeholders from the sectors they represent about the work and conclusions of the Council through new or existing structured forms of dialogue between government and civil society. Similarly, Council members from public administration are to inform the responsible bodies they represent about the conclusions of the Council. The visibility of the Council work is promoted through publishing press releases, different Council reports, decisions and other materials included in the agenda of Council sessions, but also through ensuring the presence of representatives of media at the sessions of the Council, in accordance with the relevant internal government regulations.

The purpose of the Strategy of Communication of the Council is to contribute to enhancing the role of the Council in promoting the culture of cooperation between the government and civil society and improve the quality of consultations with CSOs on priority issues on the Council agenda. In the first part of the Strategy, background (situation) analysis will be presented, considering the wider context for the Council work, but also based on the previous assessment of the Council communication capacities. Then, the vision, goals and specific objectives of the communication strategy will be elaborated, along with some horizontal principles to be incorporated in all communication activities. This will be followed by the analysis of the target audience, key messages, communication activities and tools, communication responsibility, operationalization of the strategy through adopting annual communication plans and budget, as well as procedures of assessment of the Communication Strategy.



## Situation analysis

The development of the structured dialogue between government and CSOs is considered as one of important pre-conditions for the resilience of democratic governance, as well as for sustainability of the reforms in fundamental areas of the EU accession process of candidate and potential candidate countries. The European Commission regularly monitors the progress in that area in annual country reports. In addition to the self-assessment done through the regular annual reporting on the Council work, an external assessment of the communication capacities of the Council was conducted by the support of the EU technical assistance project in 2020. That external assessment indicated several areas where there is a need for the improvement of the Council communication flow and processes and strengthening the external and the internal communication of the Council and Unit as the Council Secretariat. Based on the results of the survey conducted among CSOs in August 2020 by the EU technical assistant project, most CSOs expect to be consulted on the work of the Council and demand more transparency and visibility of the Council. More particularly, 31% of the respondents suggested more regular meetings with CSOs, direct involvement of CSOs in preparation of the Council opinions and comments on draft laws, as well as increased and improved reporting, information and communication.

The role of the Unit, as the Council secretariat, is essential in the support of the Council communication activities. The Unit regularly updates the information on the website ([www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk](http://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk)), such as minutes from the sessions, documents, results, decisions, etc. It also disseminates different calls which are on the agenda of the Council, including the call for contribution to the annual programme of the government. It does this through the webpage and the mailing list.

However, the Council is still not sufficiently visible and there is still a need for improving the two-way communication with CSOs. In general, the major challenge is a low participation of CSOs in consultations on the measures of the Strategy for Cooperation and Development of CSOs.

There is also a lack of active media relations though press releases which are only occasionally used to share certain information with the public. That requires more advanced planning of Council activities, more human resources in the Unit allocated for communication activities of the Council, as well as more proactive engagement of the Council members in communicating the Council role and activities, including also through the consultation with wider spectrum of CSOs from their sub-sectors.



## Goal, specific objectives and horizontal principles

### Goal

The main goal of this communication strategy is to contribute to the development of an open and widely inclusive dialogue on the enabling environment for civil society development in the Republic of North Macedonia.

### Specific objectives

The following specific objectives are formulated with the aim of achieving the main goal of the Strategy:

- Increase the participation of CSOs and other domestic and international stakeholders in consultations on measures of the Strategy for Development and Cooperation with Civil Society (*measured in terms of number of contributors to consultations launched by the Council on topics on its agenda; number of participants in the Council consultation sessions with CSOs/stakeholders*)
- Improve the visibility of the Council role and activities (*measured in terms of number of visitors to Council website, views of Council video clip, downloads of brochure, followers of Council FB/Twitter page, number of viewers of the Council live streaming sessions; coverage of the Council activities in media, demand of government bodies for Council inputs, etc.*)
- Improve the commitment of Council members to constructive and consistent contribution to the Council sessions/activities (*measured in terms of attendance of Council sessions, number of consultative sessions organized by CSO members in the Council with their constituencies, etc.*)

### Horizontal principles:



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CONSULTANTS FOR PROMOTING CIVIL SOCIETY

The implementation of the Communication Strategy will be based on the following horizontal principles:

- Transparency and accountability (*ensure that information on Council activities and materials is widely shared and available to the public through various channels*)
- Strengthening the evidence-based decision-making (*communicating key recommendations, findings, trends based on evidence*)
- Clarity and simplicity (*bridge the information gap and improve knowledge and understanding of wide range of CSOs on key reforms undertaken within the Strategy/AP implementation – through clear and simple communication*)
- Inclusivity (*holding extensive consultations with CSOs from all sector/regions*)

Overview of goal, objectives and horizontal principles of the Communication Strategy

Goal	Contribute to the development of an open and widely inclusive dialogue on the enabling environment for civil society development in the Republic of North Macedonia.
Specific objective 1	Increase the participation of CSOs and other domestic and international stakeholders in consultations on measures of the Strategy for Development and Cooperation with Civil Society
Specific objective 2	Improve the visibility of the Council role and activities
Specific objective 3	Improve the commitment of Council members to constructive and consistent contribution to the Council sessions/activities
Horizontal principles:	<p>HP1: Transparency and accountability</p> <p>HP 2: Strengthening the evidence-based decision-making</p> <p>HP 3: Clarity and simplicity</p> <p>HP 4: Inclusivity</p>

## Target audience



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In accordance with its mandate, the Council mainly deals with issues arising from the government policies where the feedback from CSOs is needed, as well as with the initiatives of CSOs which seek to put new topics on the government agenda. Therefore, the direct cooperation of the Council with the member organisations – representatives of government bodies (including offices of Prime Minister/Deputy Prime Minister), competent ministries and with civil society organizations is essential. In addition, the cooperation with local government bodies, but also with private sector, academic community and media is important for ensuring a more favourable environment for CSO work. These relationships also determine the target groups.

Direct target groups:

- Policy makers (Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, ministries; central government bodies)
- CSOs.

Indirect target groups:

- local government bodies, private sector, academic community, media, all citizens of the RNM.

Besides, for the purpose of this communication strategy, communication activities and tools for both external and internal target audience will be elaborated.

Internal target audience:

- CSOs - members of the Council for Cooperation between Government and Civil Society from all 16 areas of activity
- 15 government bodies, ministries that have their representatives in the Council (including also sectorial working groups), as well as offices of Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

External target audience

- CSO networks and resource centres
- All other CSOs (associations and foundations)
- Media



- Local government bodies
- Political Parties
- National Assembly (Parliament)
- President
- Business associations
- Academic Community
- EU Delegation
- Other international organizations and institutions.
- General public

## Communication activities and tools

Specific communication activities and tools should reach each group identified within both internal and external target audience.

The communication intervention lines can be grouped into three categories:

Institutional Communication	Public Relations	Marketing Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Updating information on the website <a href="http://nvosorabotka.gov.mk">nvosorabotka.gov.mk</a> (Council minutes, reports, calls,..)</li> <li>▪ Upgrade and promotion of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Press conferences/briefing sessions with journalists</li> <li>▪ Social media</li> <li>▪ Press releases and statements</li> <li>▪ Editorials and Interviews in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advertising (broadcasting of videoclip on the Council via social media; gif animation in news portals)</li> <li>▪ Printed materials (leaflet)</li> <li>▪ Other promotional materials</li> </ul>



<p>the existing or developing new Council website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Branding (visual identity) of the Council and its website</li> <li>▪ Setting up an internal knowledge-sharing platform on the main reforms discussed by the Council</li> </ul>	<p>Newspapers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interviews in TV</li> <li>▪ Information sessions with CSOs</li> <li>▪ Thematic informal events with CSOs and other stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Live streaming of the Council sessions</li> <li>▪ News from various activities of PM and ministries dedicated to cooperation with CSOs and implementing the Strategy</li> </ul>	
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**Internal target audience**

The internal communication needs to be clear and well structured, in order to sustain the division of tasks and the information flow. An effective communication inside the Council especially between the Council and the Unit for Cooperation with NGOs, as the Council Secretariat, is the key pre-condition for the success of the Communication Strategy.

Internal target audience		
Groups	Potential activities to be addressed	Expected results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSOs' representatives - members of the Council from all 16 areas of activity</li> <li>• Representatives of 15 government bodies, ministries – members of the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular updates via email on preparing the next session of the Council and following up on conclusions from previous ones</li> <li>• Internal web knowledge-sharing platform for improving internal coordination and communication</li> <li>• Workshops/trainings and other team building or capacity building activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater commitment of the Council members to joint activities</li> <li>• Better preparation of the Council members for the discussion at regular sessions</li> <li>• Clear understanding of the responsibilities of the Council members and Secretariat</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual planning of the Council work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More effective follow-up on the conclusions of the Council sessions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offices of Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occasional briefings</li> <li>Invitations to contribute to specific sessions of the Council or thematic events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved understanding of the role of the Council</li> <li>Government support to implementing Strategy/Action Plan measures and specific Council conclusions</li> </ul>

### External target audiences

The communication to the external audience has to be clear, complete and effective, in order to raise the awareness about the benefits of government-civil society cooperation, opportunities and ways of getting involved in discussions on main policy issues affecting the environment for the work of CSOs. The focus on building partnerships with external stakeholders should be on multipliers with potential of more proactive outreach.

External target audience		
Groups	Potential activities to be addressed	Expected results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All CSOs (associations and foundations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media posts</li> <li>Email updates</li> <li>Organizing open info sessions for CSOs in different regional urban centres</li> <li>Wide dissemination of calls for contribution to open consultations on topics on the Council agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved understanding of the role of the Council</li> <li>Increased participation of CSOs in open consultations on different measures of the Strategy/Action Plan addressed by the Council</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSO networks and resource centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint organisation of info sessions for CSOs</li> <li>Joint organisation of thematic events for CSOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthened partnership with key networks in promoting the Council activities and the wide</li> </ul>



		debate on the Strategy/Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Briefings with journalists</li> <li>Press releases</li> <li>Invitations to Council sessions</li> <li>Dissemination of video clip on the Council work</li> <li>Interviews with Council staff</li> <li>Preparing editorials or promo articles on the work of the Council and implementation of the Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved coverage of the Council work and implementation of measures of the Strategy/Action Plan</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local government units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint organisation of thematic sessions of the Council in different cities/municipalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved understanding of benefits of cooperation with CSOs at the local government level</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political Parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occasional briefings</li> <li>Invitations to public events organised by the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved understanding of benefits of strategic cooperation with CSOs and political support to implementing key reforms foreseen in the Strategy/Action Plan</li> <li>Generating consensus among political parties on the need for supporting government-CSO cooperation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Assembly (Parliament)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occasional briefings</li> <li>Invitations of MPs from key political groups to public events (co)organized by the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving understanding of the benefits of cooperation with CSOs on key policy reforms</li> <li>More favourable political discourse on the role of civil society</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>President</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invitations to public events (co)organized by the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More favourable political discourse on the role of civil society and its contribution to socio-economic development and democratic governance</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitations to public events (co)organized by the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased understanding of the reforms related to corporate philanthropy and investments in sustainability of CSO programs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitations of experts to thematic sessions of the Council</li> <li>• Invitations to public events (co)organized by the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More advanced cooperation between academic community and civil society in implementing Strategy/Action plan measures</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU Delegation to Republic of North Macedonia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual coordination meetings - consultations with decision-makers and donors (on enabling environment for CS)</li> <li>• Invitations to joint workshops/capacity building activities of the Council</li> <li>• Invitations to public events (co) organized by the Council and thematic sessions of the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU support generating political will for government-led reforms in the area of enabling environment for CSOs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other international organizations and institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitations to public events (co) organized by the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synergy created among key donors/international development partners on ways of supporting civil society development</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General public / citizens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media posts</li> <li>• Video clips on the Council via national TVs and all relevant social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of visitors to the Council web page</li> <li>• Increased public visibility of the Council activities</li> </ul>

## Messages

Objective	Target audiences	Key messages
Increase the participation of CSOs and other domestic and international stakeholders in	Local CSOs from various sectors	Get involved in discussion on enabling environment for civil society.



consultations on measures of the Strategy for Development and Cooperation with Civil Society	<p>CSO networks</p> <p>Academic community</p> <p>Business</p> <p>Local government bodies</p> <p>EU delegation</p> <p>International development partners</p>	<p>Let us safeguard civic space together!</p> <p>Your voice on policies affecting civil society matters!</p> <p>Active civil society is a pre-condition for sustainability of reforms in the EU integration process.</p>
Improve the visibility of the Council role and activities	<p>Media</p> <p>General public</p> <p>High political officials</p>	<p>The Council for cooperation between government and civil society is the key forum for dialogue on the future of civil society in the RNM</p>
Improve the commitment of Council members to constructive and consistent contribution to the Council sessions/activities	<p>Members of the Council from CSOs and public administration bodies</p>	

### Communication responsibility

In order to ensure a smooth implementation of the proposed communication measures, it is crucial that all the responsible bodies are actively involved in the smooth internal information flow, timely and efficient external communication with the relevant target groups and keep the communication channels with CSOs and citizens constantly open.

The main responsibility related to the information and communication measures are with the General Secretariat/Unit for Cooperation with NGOs as the Council Secretariat that implement and monitor the implementation of the Communication Strategy, and report about it to the Council, within the framework of the annual reporting on the Council work.

### Annual Communication Plans and Budget



The Communication Strategy can be implemented through the annual communication plans including the activities and tools to be implemented in detail. The annual plan will include main target groups, communication activities, key messages and, where applicable, financial resources needed for its implementation. It can be prepared and adopted along with the Annual Work plan of the Council. The Council Secretariat (Unit for Cooperation with NGOs in the General Secretariat) will contribute to the implementation of the communication work plans.

### **Procedures of assessment of the Communication Strategy**

The Council Secretariat will propose mechanisms in place to measure the impact of the different communication outputs and results, and to potentially improve the effectiveness of the Communication Strategy of the Council, through measures that will be elaborated in detail in the future annual communication plans. The key elements of Communication Strategy will be evaluated as part of the Annual Report on the work of the Council and the results will be presented to the Council and sent to the Government. Feedback surveys and needs assessments among target audiences should also be part of the commitments deriving by the implementation of the Communication Strategy. The assessment procedures of the Communication Strategy will be defined taking into the account indicators and target values, but also the expected timeframe and duration of the Strategy.

