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LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL HEALTH STRATEGY 2020 AT LOCAL LEVEL

1. Introduction

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted the National Health 2020 Strategy, which aims at improving health and well-being of all citizens and covers activities regarding health on a local community level. This analysis aims at supporting the process of implementation of the Strategy at a local level through development of local health plans.

This analysis makes attempts at mapping legal opportunities and policies for involving local self-government and other local-level institutions and their existing structures (Councils of Public Health, Development Councils etc.) in the implementation of the National Health 2020 Strategy. It will therefore help toward achieving common understanding of the Strategy and its implementation on a local level, i.e.:

- Inspecting the potential and challenges in implementing the National Health 2020 Strategy and its Operational Plan at a local level;
- Defining the elements of intersectoral oper-

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ational plans for health and well-being at a local level (process, actions, time frame, institutions responsible for implementation of the NHS 2020 at a local level).

The result of the analysis is expected to contribute toward understanding and identifying opportunities and needs at local level for implementation of NHS 2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals through development of local health and well-being plans, in line with the national development agenda.

1.1 Purpose of the Analysis

In accordance with the definition given in the Law on Public Health, “public health” is a system of knowledge and skills for preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society¹. The public health system monitors and analyzes the health status of the society in order to improve it through influencing health risk factors, such as environment factors, causes of diseases, lifestyles and habits, and social and economic factors. The concept of public health equally includes the health system and the individuals, families, the local community, the civil society and the state.

A number of strategic documents brought by the Ministry of Health and adopted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia (National Health 2020 Strategy² and its Operational Plan, the Action Plan for Public Health - 2020³ etc.), through the projected activities, recognize that understanding and solving problems regarding public health requires cooperation with many participants at all levels: national and local governance, public-health and research community of experts, industry, agriculture and the civil society by the engagement of every individual.

In interest of achieving the established objectives, The Health 2020 Strategy identifies new systems of partnerships for cooperation, especially on a local level, and suggests new forms of governance for better health,

1 “Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” No. 22/10,136/11, 144/14, 149/15 и 37/16

2 National Health 2020 Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Macedonia, 2016, available at: http://zdravje2020.mk/doc/strategija_zdravje2020_novo.pdf

3 Action Plan for Public Health – 2020, 2016, available at: http://zdravje2020.mk/doc/akciski_plan_javno_zdravje2020_novo.pdf

whereby health and well-being are set as responsibility of the government and society as a whole.⁴

The local self-government units have legal obligations and opportunities for working towards improvement of health protection through, for example, establishing advisory panels and adopting policies/acts at a local level. Therefore, this analysis attempts to identify the opportunities and needs at a local level for implementation of the Health 2020 Strategy that will provide partnership in the collaboration for health and well-being, and simultaneously for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as a strategic orientation and an international obligation of the country.

1.2 Scope and Objectives

This analysis aims to provide an overview of the policies and legal framework of the competences of the local self-government in the field of health, as well as of other sectors operating, directly or indirectly, in the field of health on a local level.

The analysis covers the existing structure and policies at a local level in order to determine which are connected to fields associated with public health and would establish sustainable institutionalized forms and mechanisms for implementation of the Health Strategy by 2020 and after.

1.3 Chosen Methodology and Approach

The methodology for operating this analysis was consisted of several phases:

- Mapping documents with which certain state functions aimed at promoting health, i.e. in close relation with public health, are transferred to the local government. Available recourses are used, most of which being online pages of appropriate ministries and municipalities.
- Conducting a list of documents. A list of collected documents (legislation, strategies, programs, analyses etc.) is prepared.
- Selection criteria: a criterion in selecting documents for analysis was that they provide a basis for including activities from the National Health 2020 Strategy and from the Operational Plan of the Strategy on a local level.

When analyzing documents, a framework of several parameters was used:

- Placement and competences of the local self-government;

4 National Health 2020 Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Macedonia, 2016, available at: http://zdravje2020.mk/doc/strategija_zdravje2020_novo.pdf

- Local-level policies for certain areas through which NHS 2020 can be implemented;
- Local-level structures for supporting the process of implementation of the NHS 2020.

2. Health in a National Context

2.1 National Development Policy in an International Context

The biggest health issues that the European region faces in the 21st century are: the economic crisis, health inequalities, aging of the population, increased level of chronic diseases, migration and urbanization, and environmental degradation and climate change. As a result of these challenges, in 2012, the WHO Regional Office for Europe adopted the European Policy Framework for Health and Well-being 2020⁵ as an important regional framework of the health and well-being policy and adopting a new vision for health after 2015. This document highlights the ultimate objective – improving health for everyone and reducing inequality in healthcare, as well as the need for participation of various sectors and the Government towards its achievement.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted in 193 UN member-states, integrated all three dimension of sustainable development (economic, social and ecological) on the Sustainable Development Summit in September, 2015⁶. In the 2030 Agenda which includes a Declaration, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and 169 specific goals, i.e. targets; there is a special place provided for health, through the Sustainable Development Goal 3: Providing a healthy life and promoting well-being for all at all ages. More than half of the targets set by SDG focus on health, through acting on the key determinants of health, such as poverty, equity, gender equality, education, employment, healthy living and working environment, climate change, establishing effective and inclusive institutions and purposeful partnerships.

SDG 3 is designed to monitor health promotion through 13 targets, which in turn strategically contribute to realization of the priorities of other SDGs.

The Republic of Macedonia aligned the National Health 2020 Strategy

5 European Framework Policy of Health and Well-being-*Health 2020*, available at: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-policy/health-2020-the-european-policy-for-health-and-well-being>

6 “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

with the Development Goals for Health in Europe, defined in the European Framework Policy of Health and Well-being-Health 2020 by WHO in Europe, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

2.2 National Health Policies

The Health 2020 Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia is an integration and coordination instrument for achieving the SDG through placement and realization of national priorities and strategic goals for health, well-being and sustainable development.

The Health 2020 Strategy establishes several thematic action plans (Public Health AP, Non-communicable Diseases and Risk Factors AP, Health and Environment AP, Communicable Diseases and Crisis AP, Health Systems and Resources AP). Simultaneously, it establishes management structures and monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the purpose of achieving coherence of policies and activities in all specific areas of every level, as well as efficiency and effectiveness in its application.

The National Sexual and Reproductive Health 2010-2020 Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia aims at providing an efficient and coordinated response to the needs of the population for improvement and protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights. The role of the local self-government in implementation of this strategy is recognized through several levels: coordination and building local government capacities, implementing activities for raising awareness among the population on topics of importance for sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially with adolescents and marginalized groups, and providing financial resources for realizing activities at a local level. Special focus is given on the part on HIV intervention, in which one of the strategic goals is completely dedicated to coordination and strengthening capacities of local government subjects in implementing the National HIV Strategy and on the part on undertaking a greater political and financial commitment for realizing the interests of the local government of relevance to SRH.

The National HIV Strategy 2012-2016 is aimed toward strengthening national systems and institutions and implementation of the national response to HIV on the long run. The Strategy puts focus on the role of the local self-government in several of the identified areas of action:

Coordination among different factors responsible for the national response to HIV (Inclusion of the local self-government in creation of the national answer to HIV through forming working bodies, memberships in the Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM), and in the National HIV Commission,

trainings, promotion, media activities), as well as in Area of action: HIV and drug use, through implementation of activities for raising awareness among the general public, media and youth for drug use prevention.

The Cold Health Action Plan for Prevention of Harmful Effects and Health Consequences of the Cold Weather and Cold Waves for the Population of the Republic of Macedonia includes predetermined activities that require a multi-sectoral approach which includes activities that encompass the local self-government units, with special focus on care for vulnerable groups.

3 Contextualization of Health at a Local Level

3.1 Placement and Competences of the Local Self-Government

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, the citizens have a guaranteed right to local self-government whose competence and function are regulated by law.

The Law on Local Self-Government⁷, inter alia, stipulates the competences of municipalities, direct participation of citizens in decision-making, organization and work of municipalities, the acts of the municipalities' bodies, cooperation with the Government etc.

The part regarding the competences of municipalities (Art.22) inter alia, regulates the issue on the competences of two wide-range categories: a) healthcare system and b) public health: healthcare, i.e. it is predicted that the municipalities in the healthcare plan shall undertake actions regarding governance of the network of public health organizations and primary care facilities that should include presence of the local self-government in all the boards of all publicly owned health organizations, in health education; health promotion; preventive activities; health protection of workers and protection at work; health oversight over the environment; oversight over the infectious diseases; assistance to patients with special needs (mental health, child abuse, etc.); and other areas that will be determined by law.

In accordance with this Article of the Law, municipalities are responsible for planning and developing programmes and activities related to primary healthcare and health promotion among local citizens as part of the public-health policies. Areas of health education, health promotion; prevention of communicable diseases; substance abuse and providing favors and help to vulnerable groups provide an opportunity for the local self-government to

7 „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No. 5/2002

include these issues in their competences too, insofar as they are of interest to the citizens of the local self-government.

The Law on Public Health⁸ aims at regulating the public health system, defining the basic functions of public health, defining the functions and tasks of the main participants – subjects in public health, promoting and strengthening partnership and cross-sectoral cooperation and, above all, providing an adequate and sustainable system for financing the public health system. According to the Law, the local self-government units are a part of the public health system and participate in implementation of the basic functions of public health, in the sense of the essential public-health functions as defined by WHO (Art.8).

The Law obligates the units of local self-government to form a Council for Public Health in their area that “shall be consisted of five members, of which four shall be representatives of the Municipality and one shall be a representative of the Centre for Public Health which covers the area of the municipality in the field of public health”. The role of these councils is “to study issues and policies in the field of public health and to form opinions, make initiatives and/or proposals to the bodies of the local self-government units”.⁹

Article 39 in The Law on Protection of Patients’ Rights,¹⁰ stipulates that, in order to advance the patient’s rights, the Municipality and the City of Skopje shall establish a Commission for Promotion of Patients’ Rights, in accordance with the legislation in the field of local self-government. The tasks of the Commission are stipulated in Article 42 of the Law and are related to the promotion and protection of patients’ rights, monitoring and evaluation of the situation regarding patients’ rights and cooperation with and suggesting measures for improvement to the competent authorities, issuing information, promotion and other material in order to improve patients’ rights, etc.

The Law on Protection of the Population Against Infectious Diseases¹¹ in Article 12, Paragraph 12 stipulates an obligation for the municipalities and the City of Skopje to organize and monitor the general measures for protection against infectious diseases, while by Article 14, the Municipal Councils and the City of Skopje are obliged, upon prior opinion of the competent Centre for Public Health, to adopt programmes for implementation

8 „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No. 22/10, 136/11, 144/14, 149/15, 37/16

9 „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No. 82/08, 12/09, 53/11, 150/15

10 „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No. 82/08, 12/09, 53/11, 150/15

11 „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No. 66/04, 139/08, 99/09, 194/14, 15-/15

of the general measures for protection of the population against infectious diseases in their area.

The general measures for protection against infectious diseases include:

1. Providing safe drinking water and control over water quality and water supply facilities;
2. Providing sanitary-hygienic and other conditions for manufacturing, processing, storage and commerce of foodstuffs;
3. Disposal of waste waters and other solid or liquid waste in a way that will prevent contamination of the human environment (water, land, air);
4. Performing preventive disinfection, fumigation, deratisation and other hygienic-technical measures in populated and other public areas;
5. Providing sanitary, technical and hygienic conditions in public facilities: school and pre-school facilities, food consumption facilities, water supply facilities, other public facilities, means of public transport and public areas;
6. Providing hygienically clean water for baths, recreation swimming pools, lakes and other objects for recreation and natural healing centers; and
7. Providing preventive and promotional activities for improving the health of the population.

Article 16 of **The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men**¹² stipulates an obligation for the units of self-government, within the framework of their authority, to determine and promote equal opportunities and to respect the principle of equal opportunities in the process of adoption of measures and activities that are necessary for the establishment of equal opportunities. The units of local self-government are obliged to form a Commission for Equal Opportunities as a permanent body whose composition, authority, tasks and obligations are determined by the Statute of the unit of local self-government. In the process of adopting development plans and other acts and decisions, the bodies of the units of local self-government are obliged to review and take in consideration the measures and activities proposed by the Commission for Equal Opportunities and the Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, as well as to cooperate with the associations of employers, the syndicate, non-governmental organizations and citizen associations active in the field of equal opportunities in order to obtain proposals and measures for accomplishment of the goal of the Law.

12. „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No. 6/06

3.2 Local-level Policies for Specific Areas through which NHS 2020 Can be Implemented

The Law on Balanced Regional Development¹³ stipulates adoption of a Strategy for Regional Development of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as a Programme for Development of Planning Region. The Programme for Development of Planning Region serves as a basis for preparation of the plans of local self-government units related to their economic, social, urban, environmental, cultural and other development (Art.14). The Strategy for Regional Development of the Republic of Macedonia (2009-2019)¹⁴ is one of the main strategic documents for development planning.

Based on the aforementioned documents, the local self-government units conduct a Strategy for Local Economic Development plan for the municipality, which contains strategic priorities for its development. Part of LSGU in this document include development activities connected to health promotion (Skopje, Shtip, Ohrid, Ilinden...), while some of them do not have activities directly aimed at health improvement, but operate through indirect activities for improvement of environmental conditions (Veles...).

Example 1: in the Local Economic Development (LED) of the Municipality of Shtip, the development of health and social protection are singled out as one priority area, taking into consideration their complementarity and mutual connection. However, a separate approach was used in analysis of these two sectors. The LED document of the Municipality of Shtip recognizes the significance of the healthcare sector and its contribution, not only for social development of the region, but also for increasing competition of its economy and opening new job positions. In the Municipality of Shtip, the following are identified as strategic goals that will contribute to development of health and social protection – the healthcare sector:

1. Building capacities for increase of the efficiency for development of mechanisms and full treatment of patients at a local, regional and national level
2. Creating conditions for opening a center for long-term (palliative) care for patients

(Source: Strategy for Local Economic Development of the Municipality of Shtip (2012 - 2017), June 2012)

13 „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No. 63/07

14 „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No.19/09

Example 2: LED of the Municipality of Ilinden, in the priority area “Human Capital and Quality of Life”, includes activities related to improvement of health and social protection; where the part regarding health priorities indicates creating conditions for building a polyclinic which would improve the access to health protection of the municipality’s population.

(Source: Strategic Plan for The Local Economic Development of the Municipality of Ilinden 2012 - 2016, May 2012)

Example 3: LED of the Municipality of Veles, stipulates several projects for realization of the Strategic Goal No. 5 – Further Improvement of Environmental Conditions, of importance to public health being the project for building a fecal canalization in the Municipality of Caska for preventing water contamination from the water supply accumulation used in Veles, decontamination of land from heavy metals, building a regional waste landfill.

(Source: Strategy for Local Economic Development of the Municipality of Veles, October 2014)

Some of the municipalities have adopted local strategic documents regarding specific health topics of interest: the City of Skopje has prepared a Local Drug Strategy for the 2015 – 2020 period, the City of Shtip has a Local Youth Strategy with a separate section on Health and Prevention, Kumanovo and Bitola have a Local Strategy for Protection against HIV, etc.

Local self- government units (LSGUs) are also preparing a Local Strategy for Gender Equality which includes activities for Women and Health (Skopje, Bitola), while others focus primarily on economic reinforcement, education, prevention of violence and participation in the public and political life (Strumica).

In accordance with the Strategy for the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014 – 2020, in 10 municipalities where Roma are present in a significant number¹⁵, local coordination bodies are formed as part of the local self-government unit. Members of these bodies are representatives from the Centers for Social Work, the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia, a primary school, a public health institution, local citizen associations and a representative from the Roma Information Centre (RIC).

¹⁵ Tetovo, Gostivar, Prilep, Bitola, Kumanovo, Delchevo, Berovo, Vinica, Kochani and Shtip

These local coordination bodies have multiple responsibilities, including establishment of thematic operational groups, preparation of operational programmes and projects for implementation of the strategic documents for social inclusion and development of the Roma community in the municipality. The activities from these local strategic documents are focused on the fields of housing, employment, education and health.

1) Public Health

The Law on Local Self-Government, the Law on Public Health, the Law on Protection of the Population Against Infectious Diseases and the Law on Protection of Patients' Rights stipulate the competences of municipalities regarding health protection. The municipalities are responsible for planning and developing programmes and activities related to primary healthcare and health promotion among the local community as part of the public health policies.

The adopted Local Programmes (Health, Social and Child Protection Programmes) for the most part contain activities regarding health protection of the population through educational activities, implementation of disinfection, disinsection and deratisation (DDD) measures, medical examinations of municipal administration and education employees (Shtip, Veles).

In municipalities where Councils for Public Health are formed, the Councils prepare their own work programme which, depending on the municipality's budget, stipulates appropriate activities: providing safe drinking water, control of water quality and water supply facilities, disposal of waste waters and other solid and liquid waste, provision of sanitary, technical and hygienic conditions in public facilities and pre-school and school facilities etc.

The Annual Programme of the Council for Public Health and the Municipality of Veles is an example of how public health planning policies can be transferred from a central to a local level. The 2017 Programme of the Council of Public Health encompasses several group activities:

- Preventive activities for health improvement of the population in the field of epidemiology (surveillance and monitoring of infectious diseases in collaboration with the Centre for Public Health Veles, preventing occurrence of infectious diseases through preventive DDD measures in schools, implementing Action Plan measures for control of Vector-Borne diseases with special emphasis on mosquitoes and ticks);

- Preventive activities for health improvement of the population in the field of sanitation and hygiene with health ecology (monitoring of quality of drinking water provided by the Public Communal Enterprise, local water supplying systems and other sources not managed by the Public Communal Enterprise, monitoring of surface waters, monitoring of air quality in relation

to the health condition of pre-school and school children, monitoring of food safety and biological quality of food in school facilities);

-Preventive activities for health improvement of the population in the social and medical field by health statistics and health promotion (health education of target groups from educational institutions, through education on sexual and reproductive health (SRH), addictive disorders, proper nutrition and physical activity, media promotion of counseling centers SRH in the Centres for Public Health, educational platforms).

Having in mind that public health involves, inter alia, creating a healthy environment for health support and protection and providing an equal approach to public health services, consideration should be given to the possibilities of providing this through the other programmes and policies of the local self-government (youth, sports social etc.). Investing in health should be understood as an important investment sector for social and economic development.

2) Social Protection

The Law on Local Self-Government gives municipalities opportunity and responsibility to develop social and child protection at a local level and to prepare development programmes for meeting specific needs of the groups at social risk: social care for disabled persons, children without parents and parental care, children with educational and social issues, children with special needs, children from single-parent families, street children, persons exposed to social risk, persons with substance abuse problems, raising awareness of the population, housing of persons put to social risk etc, in accordance with the National Programme for Development of Social Protection.

The Law on Social Protection¹⁶ introduces an obligatory element, according to which the municipality is obliged to synchronize its Development Programmes with the Strategy Programmes of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (Art. 11).

The municipalities and the City of Skopje organize and provide implementation of social protection, in accordance with the Law on Social Protection, by adopting development programmes for meeting specific needs of the citizens in the field of social protection – Programme for Realization of Social, Child and Health Care.

These Programmes are aimed at improving social and health protection

16 „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No. 79/2009, 36/11, 51/11, 166/12, 15/13, 79/13, 164/13, 187/13, 38/14, 44/14, 116/14, 180/14, 33/15, 72/15, 104/15, 150/15, 173/15, 192/15 и 30/16

of vulnerable categories of the population and the citizens and, bearing in mind that they contain activities aimed at healthcare improvement, represent the basis for implementation of specific activities defined in the Health 2020 Strategy.

The realization of the Programmes is monitored by the Commissions responsible for social and child protection. These Commissions are formed in each municipality but, depending on the capacities and needs of the municipality, in some instances they function as separate Commissions for Social, Child and Health Care (Kumanovo), while in some instances they are a part of other Commissions, i.e. the Public Affairs Commission (Municipality of Tetovo), in the Social Affairs Commission (Municipality of Ohrid, Municipality of Kichevo, Municipality of Veles).

Within the framework of a project implemented by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights, with financial support from the Austrian Development Cooperation and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy 8 municipalities have also developed local strategies for social protection and social inclusion, based on detected realistic needs of the marginalized groups (Lipkovo, Studenichani, Pehchevo, Berovo, Negotino, Radovish, Konche and Chashka).

The 2010-2018 National Strategy on Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Revised) establishes measures in numerous areas whose implementation is a responsibility of the units of local self-government. Most municipalities have adopted Local Action Plans for Persons with Disabilities (LAPLI) (Municipality of Veles, Municipality of Shtip, Municipality of Ohrid) whose main goal is strengthening the process of social inclusion and deinstitutionalization of persons with disabilities.

3) Education

The Law on Local Self-Government assigns competences to the municipality in the field of education regarding establishing, financing and administration of primary and secondary schools in cooperation with the central government, organizing transportation, food and accommodation in student dormitories for students. The decentralization enables local communities to have greater engagement in the decision-making process and a more active and more transparent management of schools by involving more stakeholders in the decision-making process, which offers opportunity for efficient control over school activities and quality of teaching.

At a local level, the Mayor is authorized to appoint and/or dismiss School Directors and to appoint an official for performing duties as Education Inspector.

The Municipal Council is authorized to establish schools and terminate

their work and to participate in activities of the School Board through its own representatives. Within the School Board, in addition to other responsibilities, the representatives of the Municipal Council participate in proposing the school's Annual Work Programme and conduct annual work reports. The role of the representatives of the Municipal Council in the School Boards can contribute to realization of part of the activities from the Health 2020 Strategy, primarily of those relating to health promotion and provision of healthy work environment for the students. In realization of such activities, a very important element is cooperation with the appropriate Centres for Public Health.

4) Environment

In regards to protection of the environment and nature, the Law on Local Self-Government establishes responsibility of municipalities to undertake measures for protection and prevention of water, air and land pollution, protection of nature, protection against noise and non-ionizing radiation.

In Accordance with the Law on Environment (Art. 60), a National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP I and II) has been prepared. Article 60 also defines the obligation of municipalities to conduct Local Environmental Action Plans (LEAP) on the basis of the assessment of specific conditions and needs of the Municipality and in line with the National Environmental Action Plan. The Law on Environment defines a number of obligations and responsibilities for the municipalities and they play a key role in the implementation of the major part of the requirements regulated by the national legal framework in the field of environment.

The Local Environmental Action Plans (LEAP) are development documents aimed at protection and improvement of the environment in a particular area (municipality), with priority being given to environmental protection and improvement measures. The main objective is protection and improvement of nature and the environment through a system of long-term planning measures and actions within a temporal and financial framework.

In accordance with the Law on Environment, the Municipal Council and of the City of Skopje shall establish a body, managed by the Mayor, to monitor the implementation of the Local Environmental Action Plan and to propose changes in it, and to conduct reports and submit them to the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

The Local Ecological Action Plans determine activities directly related to the health and environmental goals set in the Health 2020 Strategy, whose achievement requires the local self-government units and an integrated and intersectoral approach.

The Municipal Council establishes a Commission for Protection of Environment and Nature (Skopje) as an operating body in municipalities which considers issues of environmental protection and improvement; otherwise these issues are considered by related commissions that have an established programme for work in this field, eg. the Commission for Urbanism, Communal Activities, Traffic and Protection of Nature and Environment (Gazi Baba, Veles, Kavadarci). The Councils also adopt appropriate programmes related to environmental protection (eg. the Programme for Air Pollution Reduction and Ambient Air Quality Improvement, Plan and Programme for Waste Management etc.)

The Municipal Administration responsible for environmental protection (mostly Sector/Department for Communal Activities and Environmental Protection) prepares and conducts Programmes related to nature and environmental protection, as well as the Local Environmental Action Plan. Cooperation with citizen associations, institutions and foundations is realized as means for conducting the activities.

3.3 Structures at a Local Level for Support of the NHS 2020 Implementation Process

1) Mayor

The Mayor has several competences related to performance of activities delegated to the municipality by law. Hence, the mayor, with his personal efforts, can contribute toward making the health-related issues and health improvement of the municipality's population a constant part of both his agenda and the agenda of the local structures during his mandate.

2) Municipal Council

The Municipal Council is a representative body of the citizens and it is constituted by representatives of the citizens elected on general, direct and free elections by secret ballot, with a mandate of four years.

The Council Member has a right and duty:

- To propose discussion of issues, occurrences and situations of local significance, as well as of importance for the citizens of the Municipality;
- To give initiatives for adoption of decisions and other acts within the competence of the Council, and to propose amendments in a manner and procedure determined by the Rules of Procedures;
- To request data and other information, from the municipal administration, as well as from public services, offices and enterprises and other

institutions founded by the Municipality, for issues of their scope that are necessary for his/her work in the Council.;

- To request and receive professional assistance in drafting proposals that he/she submits to the Council, in asking advisory questions and implementing of other tasks given by the Council, i.e. the Commission the Member is a part of; and
- To keep in secrecy data, classified as such, obtained at a Council or Commission session.

3) Municipal Administration

A Municipal Administration is organized for the performance of activities that fall within the competences of the municipal bodies. The municipalities have sectors and departments for public affairs which, among other tasks in accordance with the legal competence, have a task to conduct activities in the field of health protection.

4) Consumer Protection Council

In accordance with Article 56 of the Law on Local Self-Government, the Municipal Council may establish a Consumer Protection Council, consisted of representatives of the larger groups of public service users, for reviewing issues and determining proposals regarding the service quality of the public agencies of the municipality.

The Councils, in their scope of work determined by the Statute of the Municipality, can organize public platforms and other forms of citizen participation that will debate on consumer protection improvement (The City of Skopje).

5) Council for Public Health

In Accordance with the Law on Public Health, the local self-government units shall form a Council for Public Health in their area. The Law allows two or more local self-government units to form a Council for Public Health, whereof each unit is represented by one member. The Council for Public Health shall be constituted of five members, of which four shall be representatives of the Municipality and one shall be a representative of the Centre for Public Health which covers the area of the municipality. For the area of the City of Skopje, a Council for Public Health shall be formed, constituted of 13 members: one member of each municipality which is a part of the City of Skopje, two members of the Centre for Public Health of the City of Skopje and three members as independent experts in the field of public health. The tasks of the Council for Public Health are to study

issues and policies in the field of public health and to form opinions, make initiatives and/or proposals to the bodies of the local self-government units.

6) Commission for Promotion of Patients' Rights

In order to improve patients' rights, the Law on Protection of Patients' Rights stipulates that, in order to advance patients' rights, the Municipality and the City of Skopje establish a Commission for Promotion of Patients' Rights, in accordance with the legislation in the field of local self-government.

The Commission is consisted of nine members chosen in accordance with the Statute of the Municipality, i.e. the City of Skopje, of which: representatives of patients – members of patient associations, two representatives of non-governmental organizations operating in the field of human rights and citizen initiatives, two doctors from the Municipality and three members delegated by the Municipal Council, i.e. by the City of Skopje. The members of the Commission shall not work in healthcare institutions that provide health protection. The members of the Commission have a two-year-mandate, with a right to one consecutive year.

The Commission performs the following tasks for the area of the Municipality for which it was established, i.e. the City of Skopje:

1. Promotion and protection of patients' rights;
2. Monitoring and evaluation of the situation regarding the protection of patients' rights;
3. Proposal of measures for improvement of the protection of patients' rights to the competent authorities;
4. Cooperation with competent authorities;
5. Review of complaints from patients and suggestion of undertaking measures to competent authorities;
6. Requiring professional expertise if considered necessary for determining a condition;
7. Keeping a record of individual complaints of patients, as well as measures conducted for protection of patients' rights;
8. Preparation and submission of an Annual Report on Protection of Patients' Rights to the Municipal Council, i.e. the City of Skopje;
9. Issuing information, promotion and other material in order to pro-

6 HIFM, (2017), *Annual report for 2016*, HIFM, Skopje

7 HIFM,(2016), Press release, available at: <http://www.fzo.org.mk/WBStorage/Files/Soopstenie%20za%20najnovi%20rezultati%20od%20kol%20centarot%2027-9-2016.pdf>

mote patients' rights and.

10. Performing other duties determined by this Law.

The Commission issues Rules of Procedures for its work which regulates its way of work more specifically.

7) Commission for Equal Opportunities in Local Self-Government Units

The units of local self-government are obliged to form Commissions for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in accordance with the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men¹⁷.

8) Municipal Council Commissions

The municipalities with their statutes establish the organization and work of the municipal bodies, as well as the organization and work of the council commissions. The composition and the scope of work of the commissions are established by the Act on their formation. The Centres for Public Health take part in preparation of appropriate work programmes.

Different Commissions can be formed by the statute of the municipality, depending on the municipalities' capacity, whereby implementing activities of the health scope of work can be attributed to the Health Commission (Kichevo, Kavadarci), the Social and Health Protection Commissions (Kochani), the Social Affairs Commission (Prilep, Ohrid, Veles), the Public Affairs Commission (Bitola, Resen).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

1. There are broad legal grounds for arrangement of the local health community.
2. The element of well-being is not adequately addressed in the regulations.
3. Legislation does not exclude local health plans as a form for planning and conducting activities regarding health and well-being in the municipalities, although it does not explicitly regulate them. Certain regulations include development plans as a policy instrument.
4. Different regulations determine the formation of different bodies at a local level.
5. There are grounds for better integration of various programmes and

17. „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No.66/06

activities for health and well-being.

6. There are grounds for focusing on equality in health and human rights, as well as appropriate interventions targeted towards vulnerable population groups.

4.2 Recommendations and Possible Solutions

Having in mind the fact that today, the reasons for the burden of diseases are most often found in the social sphere, living conditions, lifestyles and environmental conditions, as well as in numerous activities of the municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia in the field of environmental protection, local economic development, communal activities, social and child care, education and healthcare; the role and the significance of the activities of the local community regarding health improvement of the population can be clearly seen.

Therefore, as possible forms of planning and implementation of health activities and the well-being of the population, it is recommended that the units of local self-government form Councils for Public Health within their municipal bodies, where they have not been formed so far, in order to demonstrate their will, preparedness and commitment to undertaking obligations in the decentralization process of the health improvement/health promotion and public health.

The Councils for Public Health should develop their own programmes to fit the specific needs of the population, in the form of a longer-term local intersectoral health plan as a strategic document for improvement of the population's health status.

In designing and implementing such plans, representatives of other bodies of the local self-government in the field of education, social protection, communal activities, environmental protection and local economic development should be included.

In regards to the financing of local intersectoral health plans, opportunities should be considered for a more active role of municipalities in applying for foreign-source projects and organization of donation conferences with the business community that functions on a local and regional level, in order to provide a financial fund for implementation of activities aimed at improving the health status and well-being of the population with special focus on the vulnerable groups. Investing in health is rarely on the top of the priority list of policy creators, but it must be noted that investments are returned after a longer period and that investing in health results in a healthy economy and a rich local community.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Preparation of local intersectoral plans on health and well-being, in a wide participatory process, which will provide at a local community level:
 - Integration of activities, capacities and structure and the health and well-being budget and
 - Focus on equality in health and human rights, as well as appropriate interventions targeted towards vulnerable population groups and
 - Intersectoral cooperation for health and well-being.
2. The Ministry of Health and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia are responsible for development and implementation of health policies. The Ministry of Health develops and monitors the organizational structures and is responsible for assessment of their functions, while the Ministry of Local Self-Government, along with municipal authorities, should also play a role in the development of public health policies. Therefore, the local authorities should be more actively involved in the processes of the health protection and public health decentralization, and special efforts should be provided for improving the capacities of local administration.
3. The municipality should regularly monitor the health status of the population through its bodies, and identify issues and occurrences which could lead to health status disorders, take actions and measures for disease prevention, propose adoption of or change in existing regulations in this field, conduct educational activities regarding the health protection plan and activities for raising awareness of the local population on the significance of health status and healthcare. In this context, strengthening and function of the Councils for Public Health and the Commission for Patients' Rights Promotion is of particular importance.
4. Care for socially disadvantaged individuals at a local level is of particular importance for implementing the National Health Strategy. In addition, the municipalities must take actions for care and healthcare of socially disadvantaged individuals that do not have health insurance, homeless persons, persons with special needs and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. In this context it is particularly important that municipalities, through their representatives, inform these categories of citizens of the meaning of disease (especially infectious disease) prevention. In realization of the Policy on Health protection

of the population related to socially disadvantaged individuals and persons at social risk, the Municipalities should cooperate not only with Health institutions, but with the Centres for Social Care as well.

5. Regarding education, the local self-government units should direct their activities for healthcare of students toward educational institutions - primary and secondary schools. To implement this goal, the local authority bodies should undertake activities for informing and educating children and students about the meaning of human health. Educational institutions should regularly conduct educational and other activities as means for informing this category of citizens about the dangers of infectious diseases, the meaning of a healthy environment, the meaning of healthy lifestyles – proper nutrition and physical activity, the dangers of use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs etc. Numerous activities are necessary to point out the dangers and to prevent undesired conditions. Municipalities should regularly conduct activities regarding disinfection, disinsection and deratisation, as well as other sanitary and hygienic measures in educational institutions.

Abstract

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted the National Health 2020 Strategy, which aims at improving health and well-being of all citizens and scopes, among other, activities for health at community level. This analysis aims at supporting the process of implementation of the Strategy at a local level through development of local health plans. This paper attempts to map the legal opportunities and policies for involving local self-government and other local-level institutions and their existing structures in the implementation of the National Health 2020 Strategy. It therefore grasps toward achieving common understanding of the Strategy and its implementation on a local level, through inspecting the potentials and challenges in implementing the National Health 2020 Strategy and its Operational Plan at a local level; and defining the elements of intersectoral operational plans for health and well-being at a local level (process, actions, time frame, institutions responsible for implementation of the NHS 2020 at a local level). The result of the analysis is expected to contribute toward understanding and identifying opportunities and needs at local level for implementation of NHS 2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals through development of local health and well-being plans, in line with the national development agenda.

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