

STRATEGIC PLAN

of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information

EXTRACT

Free access to public information is a universal human right that should be enjoyed equally by all concerned and interested parties. The strategic plan of APRFAPI defines the principles, strategic goals and values through which the Agency will ensure equal and free access to public information.

The freedom of access to public information is the supporting foundation of every modern society and represents the basis for the enjoyment of other human rights and freedoms in a modern democratic system.

Only an informed citizen can have an adequate view of the state of the society in which he lives, and only an informed citizen can participate successfully in the public discourse.

With the adoption of the new Law on Free Access to Public Information, the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information, as the legal successor of the Commission, continues to play the role of a central actor in the direction of the realization and protection of this constitutionally guaranteed right.

The Agency recognizes transparency and accountability in public institutions as a necessary process that must be maintained and continuously improved by the entire institutional team.

This process significantly contributes to nurturing the integrity, efficiency, effectiveness and responsibility of the institutions - holders of information, thus affirming their legitimacy before the public.

On the other hand, since the past year and a half of its existence, the Agency perceives the low level of awareness of citizens with the right of free access as the main reason for the reduced use of this right.

This degree of awareness contributes to the reduction of public pressure, a tool that is a central driver of the progress of a democratic society.

Starting from the stated findings, the two basic pillars, the strategic priorities based on which this Strategic Plan of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information¹ was prepared, are the protection and promotion of the right to free access to public information in the Republic of North Macedonia and strengthening the Agency's institutional capacity.

The agency is basing its operations and will continuously advocate for establishing a balance between the protected interests of public institutions and the public interest, which is omnipresent.

Plamenka Bojcheva,

Director of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information

Introduction

Existing Legal Framework for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information

The right to access information is one of the fastest-growing rights today. The number of national laws on access to information has increased significantly over the past two decades, reaching a figure of 128. In 2016, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights recognized it as protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Its

¹ The strategic plan was developed within the framework of the IPA 2 project, financed by the EU "Promotion of transparency and accountability of the public administration in the Republic of North Macedonia" (EUP/139891/DH/SER/MK), IPA 2 EU Funded Project ("Promoting Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration of North Macedonia, referred to as ProTracco (Public Reference Europe Aid/139891/DH/SER/MK)"). The Agency is the second direct beneficiary of activities contained in Component 2: Support to the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

further recognition in Europe was marked by the entry into force in 2020 of the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, the right to free access to public information is constitutionally guaranteed in Article 16, paragraph 3 of the Constitution.

The primary regulation that regulates and operationalizes this constitutionally guaranteed right is the Law on Free Access to Public Information. The first Law on free access to public information was adopted in 2006 ("Official Gazette" No. 13/2006, 86/2008, 6/2010, 42/2014, 148/2015, 55/2016 and 64/2018 and "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" No. 98/2019).

In 2019, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia passed the new Law on Free Access to Public Information (Official Gazette No. 101/2019), which formally began to be applied on November 30, 2019.

One of the essential novelties in the Law on Free Access to Public Information from 2019, given its predecessor in 2006, is the transformation of the Commission for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information into an independent body - the Agency for Protection of the right of free access to public information, managed by the Director and Deputy Director.

What is new in the existing Law on Free Access to Public Information is that compared to the previous law, in accordance with Article 30 of the new Law on Free Access to Public Information, the Agency, in addition to the powers it had as a Commission, acquired additional powers in the area of conducting misdemeanour proceedings through its own Misdemeanor Commission for misdemeanour proceedings; mandatory obligations established in the law of each holder of information resulting from the established definition of the public interest in the law; increasing the number of institutions that are required by law to be registered as holders of information; increasing the transparency of public institutions, according to Article 10, or the List of information that institutions must publish in a prominent place on their websites with data in an appropriate format, etc.

The right of access to information implies two obligations for public bodies. First, a proactive duty to publish information of a public nature about the activities of the institutions, either by publishing public original documents or copies of the documents that the holder of the information has created or has at his disposal; secondly, the reactive obligation to respond to the requests of information seekers, i.e. two obligations that, if respected, will create a transparent and accountable administration in which citizens and society will have confidence.

The Law on Free Access to Public Information from 2019 contains the broader approach regarding the right to free access to public information. According to its provisions, public authorities in the Republic of North Macedonia have an obligation not only for passive transparency but also for active (Articles 9 and 10). The law on using data from the public sector ("Official Gazette No. 27/2014") was adopted in 2014. This law establishes the obligation of the bodies and institutions from the public sector to publicly publish the data they create in the

exercise of their competencies in accordance with the law in an open format. The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has also shown its willingness to promote proactive publication in accordance with the Transparency Strategy of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (2019-2021), the Strategy for Public Administration Reforms 2018-2022, the Open Data Strategy and the National Action Plan for open government partnership.

The commitment of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia to strengthening free access to public information, i.e. to transparency and accountability of state institutions and bodies, has been confirmed by the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation with the Agency in 2021.

Primary Functions of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information

The Agency for the Protection of Free Access to Public Information of the Republic of North Macedonia (hereinafter: the Agency), with headquarters in Skopje, acts as an unaffiliated and independent state authority, with rights, obligations and responsibilities determined by this law, financed by the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia. The Agency, as a legal entity, reports on its work to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia through an annual report.

According to the valid legal framework², the competencies of the Agency, defined in Article 30 of the Law, are as follows:

The Agency conducts administrative proceedings and decides on appeals against the decision by which the owner of the information refused or rejected the request for access to information of the applicants; takes care of the implementation of the provisions of the law; prepares and publishes a list of information holders; gives opinions on proposals for laws regulating free access to information; develops policies and provides guidelines regarding the exercise of the right to free access to information; conducts misdemeanor proceedings through the Misdemeanor Commission, which decides on misdemeanors in accordance with the law; undertakes activities related to the education of the holders of information about the right of free access to the information they have; cooperates with the holders of information regarding the exercise of the right of access to information; prepares an annual report on its work and submits it to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia; carries out works of international cooperation related to the execution of the international obligations of the Republic of North Macedonia, participation in the implementation of projects of international organizations and cooperates with the authorities of other countries and institutions in the field of free access to

² Law on free access to public information ("Official Gazette of RSM" No. 101/2019), at the time when the Strategic Plan was developed (November 2020 - January 2021)

information of a public nature; promotes the right to free access to information of a public nature and performs other tasks established by law.

The following are some of the responsibilities that the Agency for the Protection of Free Access to Public Information performs in order to fulfil its mandate:

- Development of transparency policies,
- Improvement of the legislation on FAPI,
- Keeping track of the scope of LFAPI,
- Education for LFAPI,
- Raising public awareness about LFAPI,
- Conducting special administrative procedures,
- Cooperation with related institutions and partners at the domestic and international levels.

The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information is managed by a Director and deputy and currently employs 18 administrative persons.

When preparing this Strategy, the following documents were taken into account:

Laws and bylaws

- Law on free access to public information (Official Gazette of RSM No. 101/2019),
- The Guidelines for the Application of the Law on Free Access to Public Information (Official Gazette of the RSM No. 60/2020),
- The rules for the work of the misdemeanor commission,
- Law on general administrative procedure,
- Law of Offenses,
- A rulebook for the internal organization of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information,
- A rulebook for the systematization of jobs in the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

Strategic documents

- Strategy for Reforms in Public Administration - SRPA (2018-2022),
- Transparency Strategy of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (2019-2021);
- National Strategy for the combat against corruption and conflict of interest;
- The Open Data Strategy.

Reports, analyses, research and other documents

- EU reports on the progress of the Republic of North Macedonia,

- Functional analysis of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information
- Analysis of access to information according to the new Law on Free Access to Public Information, NGO - Center for Civil Communications,
- Conducted research on public opinion on free access to public information in November 2020,
- Other relevant national strategies and documents.

The Strategic Planning Process in The Agency For the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information - APRFAPI

The strategic planning process, in its simplest terms, is the method that institutions use to develop plans for achieving overall, long-term goals.

The strategic planning and implementation process include several stages which are given in the table below.

Strategic Planning Stages
1. Preparation of the strategic planning process
2. Data collection and analysis
3. Development of the draft strategy, action plan, and monitoring methodology
4. Finalization/presentation to interested/involved parties
5. Implementation of the strategic plan and action plan by year
6. Revision of the strategic plan and action Plan

The Strategic Planning process in the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information of the Republic of North Macedonia - APRFAPI, began in the fall of 2020, with financial and technical support from the IPA 2 project "Promoting Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration".

Methodology

Starting from the valid national documents³, adapted and adopted by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and based on the Methodology for strategic planning and preparation of the Annual Work Program of the Government, at the beginning of this process a proposed methodology was developed for the entire process of strategic planning in the Agency. This methodology is provided in full in Annex A4⁴.

Taking into account the crucial importance of the participation of stakeholders and stakeholders in the strategic planning process of the Agency, the methodology included a technique of 360-degree evaluation of all involved and affected stakeholders from the holders of information, holders of information acting according to the exceptions of the Law on FAPI, information seekers, the civil sector, the academic and expert public, journalists and the media, the donor and international community, as well as the employees and management of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

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The steps in the strategic planning process of the Agency are defined in several stages: preparation and planning, collection and analysis of secondary and primary data on current, past and future activities of all participants and evaluation for 360 degrees of all factors that influence the operation of the Agency, discussion and workshops with the employees of the Agency, preparation of a draft document and action plan, verification and preparation of the final version of the Agency's Strategic and Action Plan. Within the framework of the process, a Methodology for monitoring the progress of the implementation of the Strategic and Action Plan has been prepared.

The Agency organizes the process of strategic planning through the following stages:

Phase 1: Preparation of the strategic planning process

1. Defining methodology,
2. Preparation of the steps in the strategic planning process.

³ Methodology for strategic planning and preparation of AWPGRNM; Methodology for amending and supplementing the Methodology for strategic planning and preparation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, October 2019 (<https://vlada.mk/podzakonski-akti>).

⁴ Annex A Methodology for the process of developing a Strategic Plan for the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

Phase 2: Data collection and analysis

3. Study of relevant documents for the strategy, analysis of secondary data, provided by the responsible persons,
4. Determining a list of interested/involved parties in the strategic planning process,
5. Conduct focus groups for discussion with individual interested/involved parties,
6. Key interviews with employees and responsible persons in the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information,
7. Analysis of the collected primary data from focus groups and interviews with key persons in the process.

Phase 3: Development and preparation of the first draft of the Strategy, the Action Plan (AP) and the Monitoring Methodology

8. Preparation of the first version of the Strategic Plan,
9. Sharing the first version of the plan with the employees of the Agency,
10. Entering the remarks, comments in Strategy,
11. Preparation of the first version of the Action Plan and Methodology for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan,
12. Presentation of the Action Plan and Methodology to the employees of the Agency,
13. Entering the remarks, and comments in the Action Plan and Methodology.

Phase 4: Finalization and presentation of documents to interested/involved parties

14. Organizing and presenting the Strategy, Action Plan and Methodology for monitoring an event organized by the Agency, entering any possible comments;

Phase 5: Training for the implementation of the Strategic and Action Plan by year;

15. Training of responsible persons on methods and tools for implementation;
16. Annual monitoring of the set indicators for monitoring implementation.

Analysis of the Opinions of External Interested Parties (Stakeholder Analysis)

In order to hear the opinions and discuss the key issues of all interested parties regarding the operation of the Agency and the existing legal framework, three focus groups were organized in November 2020. They were comprised of active stakeholders, who cooperate with the Agency on a daily basis and have experience in the implementation of the right to free access to information of a public nature. The first focus group was composed of representatives of the information holders, the second of representatives of the applicants, and the third of the representatives of the institutions that are responsible for applying the exceptions to the right of access to information.

Stakeholder representatives who were invited to focus group discussions, 80% of whom responded positively and delegated their representative, are listed in the table below.

1. Focus group discussion with information holders	2. Focus group discussion with the holders of information (with the exceptions of the freedom of access to information)	3. Focus group discussion with information requesters
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ministry of Local Self-Government 2. Ministry of Finance 3. Ministry of Health 4. Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning 5. Inspection Council 6. City of Skopje 7. Chamber of Commerce of Macedonia 8. State Environmental Inspectorate 9. Supreme Court of the Republic of North Macedonia 10. Higher Administrative Court of the Republic of North Macedonia 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ministry of Defense 2. Ministry of Internal Affairs 3. Ministry of Justice 4. Administration for the execution of sanctions 5. Ministry of Information society and administration 6. State Administrative Inspectorate 7. Directorate for Security of Classified Information 8. General Secretariat 9. Agency for Personal Data Protection 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NGO - Center for Civil Communications 2. NGO - ESE 3. NGO - FOOM 4. OSCE mission - donor 5. NDI - donor 6. Experts/professors 7. The Association of Journalists 8. Journalists

<p>11. Administrative Court of the Republic of North Macedonia</p> <p>12. Ombudsman of the Republic of North Macedonia</p> <p>13. AD with the public interest – EVN, BEG</p> <p>14. Bureau for representation of the Republic of North Macedonia before the EU Court of Human Rights</p>		
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The Annex of this document includes the most important points from the focus discussions.

A. Holders of Information

The holders of public information emphasized the positive experiences and practices they had in the area of working with the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information:

- ✓ A strong point of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Public Information is that the employees have always been professional and available to solve dilemmas when acting upon received requests and solve problems and questions in direct contact and consultation.
- ✓ The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information regularly conducts training for new and old appointees, which is an additional exchange of experiences and is very instructive for the information holders.
- ✓ The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information receives requests and complaints electronically (during the pandemic), which has been evaluated as a better and more efficient operation by the holders.

Certain possibilities followed, which are also given as recommendations for the following activities in the next five-year period, such as:

- A proposal made by the information holders about the need to draft by-laws (guidelines for the implementation of the law, guidelines for officials in dealing with certain specific situations with requirements, guides, a delegation of responsibilities, etc.).
- To encourage active transparency among the information holders, to improve the communication with the institution-holders of information, and to update the instructions on which information should be published on the web pages.
- To provide informational content in a timely manner (or a portal) where the institutions as holders of information would constantly find information that their web pages should additionally contain. (The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information pointed out that the development of a new IT tool (community e-portal) for improved communication with the holders of information should be developed through the IPA2 project.)

It is necessary to work on removing and improving some current conditions such as:

- Officials should be protected in the professional performance of their tasks;
- The delivery of a paper copy and the separation of information, i.e. its processing, generates costs in time and resources;
- Non-existence of analytics and statistics for the total number of requests and the total number of complaints, a structured presentation, i.e. division of information by municipalities;
- If the request is incomplete, it should be marked as irregular and the deadline has not expired and it should be kept as a supplement to the request.

B. Information Requesters

Requesters of public information gave quite exhaustive, elaborate and specific remarks and suggestions for positive experiences and practices regarding the operation of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information. Below are their comments:

- ✓ The applicants pointed out that the employees of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information are quite proactive, and constructive and respond to every received request for information.
- ✓ The applicants' assessment is that the majority of institutions are transparent and actively publish public information, and this practice should be promoted and supported in the future.
- ✓ The applicants pointed out that the strength of the Agency is that they are flexible and adapt to new working conditions during a pandemic, working electronically.

The applicants indicated the following possibilities and recommendations, which are given as recommendations for activities in the next five-year period:

- Proposal to the Agency to promote itself as a leader in the realization of the protection of the right to free access to information.
- To support capacity building of the holding institutions, not only at the central but also at the local level.
- A proposal to encourage all citizens to start using this right of access to information (not only journalists and the non-governmental sector) is not only good for everyone but also enables greater responsibility and accountability on the part of the institutions.
- To promote law enforcement as one of the strongest links in the protection of the right to free access to public information.

The following are the applicants' suggestions for eliminating flaws and improving some current conditions:

- The Agency for the protection of the right to free access to public information should be informed by the holders of information whether the Agency's decisions and solutions following their complaints have been received or not.
- The applicants believe that many officials within the institutions do not know enough about the law and that they should be trained additionally.
- From what the claimants know, some holders keep very important public information from being made public (more specifically in the courts, for inspection of judgments and pronounced sanctions of high instances in society). The proposal to the Agency is to find a model that will address the issue of providing citizens and the professional scientific community with access to such data.
- Applicants believe that a problem may arise when a new manager changes officials and gives new powers to other persons. The problem arises with the rotation of officials who are in charge of mediating public information.

Analysis of Internal Factors (SWOT Analysis)

Analysis of internal factors or the so-called SWOT refers to identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and is a widely used technique for assessing these four aspects of an organization or institution.

The SWOT analysis is used to make the most of what the institution has, as well as to use the best advantage of the institution. On the other hand, the risk of failure can be reduced by understanding what is missing and eliminating the dangers and threats that might otherwise appear unexpectedly.

The SWOT analysis identifies strengths/weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats in the operation of the institution and provides guidance on what should be taken into account and be the focus of the institution's future development strategy. The strengths and weaknesses reflect the internal capacities and are what is in the competence of the employees and management of the Agency and give an overview of equipment, capacities, resources, way of working and organization and other internal issues.

Opportunities and threats arise from the legal framework, the (in)action of other stakeholders in the system, cooperation and other issues that affect the work of the institution but are beyond its power.

SWAT Analysis

Positives/Strengths	Weaknesses/Shortcomings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information - APRFAPI protects and realises the right to free access to public information. ✓ Employees show high professionalism in their work. ✓ The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information is recognized by the holders and seekers of information as a leader in protecting RFAPI. ✓ The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information always openly, promptly meets and responds to the holders of information in fulfilling their legal obligations to act in accordance with the provisions of the LFAPI. ✓ The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information always provides support for holders and applicants with clarifications, additions and other appropriate assistance. ✓ The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information has excellent cooperation with civil society organizations in the field of protection of the right to access to public information. <hr style="width: 50%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p style="text-align: center; color: #4a7ebb;">Possibilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To instruct the Misdemeanor Commission to solve them agilely the problems with the authorities of officials and their fulfilment of the legal obligation. ✓ Strengthening the role of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information in proactive transparency and publication of information by the holders. <hr style="width: 50%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p style="text-align: center; color: #4a7ebb;">Threats</p>

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- To suggest changes and modifications to the legislation governing officials' authority.
 - To make instructions, and guides for the officials, to help them in their daily work in fulfilling the obligations of this law.
 - Involvement of representatives from the Agency in the adoption of legal amendments and by-laws.
 - To increase and strengthen trust in the operation of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information of a Public Character by the stakeholders.

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- To resolve the actions of officials as an internal issue (the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information will provide guidance through the preparation of a debt model).
 - Officials mediating public information have limitations regarding their powers (they depend on managers, access to archives, documents, etc.)
 - The silence of the administration as one of the most essential problems in LPRFAPI.
 - Requesters' failure to understand RFAPI increases the number of requests and, by extension, the strain on the time and energy of the people responsible for managing the information (the holders of the information and, most importantly, the officials tasked with mediating the requests). Namely, the largest number of the requests are for private issues and for cases in which the applicants are already parties before the holders in accordance with the provisions of other relevant material laws).
 - Adoption of legal amendments and additions and by-laws without consulting the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.
 - Alterations to working conditions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The non-regulation of electronic/digital requests with a legal framework can lead to the misuse of RFAPI (e.g. private purposes).

The Vision

Institutional recognition of the Agency as a credible affirmer and protector of the right to free access to public information.

The Mission

Continuous implementation, promotion and protection of the right to free access to public information in the direction of increasing the transparency and accountability of institutions and facilitating access to public information.

The Values

Our values, which are deeply woven into our daily work, are the professional principles that we implement in the realization of our vision and the goals of this strategy. The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information with its employees strives to:

✓ Achieve the goals through its action, which is determined by the legal framework;
✓ To put institutional values at the core of everything it does in a way that is ambitious, cooperative and service-oriented for citizens. Therefore, in principle, the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information will advocate for the following values and principles in its operations:

- **Inclusiveness:** We will work and collaborate effectively with various stakeholders and interested parties (citizens, information seekers and holders of information), to enable consistent application of the right to free access to public information.
- **Proactivity:** we will advocate and stimulate proactive action in the public sector in the direction of improving citizens' access to public information.
- **Education** of information holders and public institutions, for enhanced accountability and transparency in operations, and consistent implementation of the law by information holders.
- **Continuous improvement** of policies and practices for enabling the right of free access to public information.
- **Informing** the citizens who are the holders of public information.
- **Equal access** to the treatment of citizens when exercising the right to free access to public information;
- **Ethics and integrity** to ensure timely access to public information for all interested and affected parties. The values contribute to strengthened accountability and transparency in operations, thereby gaining citizens' trust in the system and state institutions and public administration.

Strategic Determinations

Strategic Priorities

In developing the Agency's strategic framework for the next five years, the Agency considered the present legal framework, public opinion research, stakeholder analysis, the analysis and conclusions of the Agency's functional analysis, as well as the analysis of circumstances by personnel and management.

To achieve the mission, and to contribute to the realization of the vision, the Agency in the next period will work on the implementation of the following strategic priorities:

Strategic Priority 1:

Protection and promotion of the right of free access to public information in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Strategic Priority 2:

Strengthening the institutional capacity and public recognition of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

Strategic Priority 1

Protection and promotion of the right to free access to public information in the Republic of North Macedonia

SG 1: Facilitating the process of exercising one's constitutionally protected	SG 2: Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the holders of public	SG 3: Promotion of policies and practices for exercising the right to free access to
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right of access to public information.	information for exercising the right to free access to public information.	public information.
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R1.1:	R1.2:	R2.1:	R2.2:	R3.1:	R3.2:
Enhanced awareness of the right to free access to Public information, for the information requesters.	Information seekers know how to exercise the right to free access to public information.	Increased active transparency, accountability and proactivity among the holders of information and enabling access to quality and timely available public information nature.	Decreased administrative silence (tacit denials) and bolstered "reactive" transparency promotion in public institutions.	Established and functional monitoring system for the implementation of the decisions of the Agency for the protection of the right to free access to public information.	Better implementation of the legislation on fulfilling the right to free access to information by amendments and additions to policies and procedures in light of the evidence.

Objective No. 1: Facilitating and Enabling the Application of the Right to Access to Public Information

The results stemming from this strategic objective are aimed at those requesting public information. The right to public information is equally available to legal entities and natural persons. However, the research conducted before the preparation of the strategic plan points to the fact that the right to free access to public information is mostly used by the media and the civil sector, followed by legal entities and citizens, who usually invoke this right in the event that has a procedure/case with a certain public institution.

With this strategic goal, the Agency plans to bring the right of free access to public information closer to all information seekers, which on the one hand will influence the strengthening of the proactive use of the right, and on the other hand will encourage improved reactive practice of the provisions of the law by the holders that would fulfil the ultimate goal of the Agency, i.e. greater transparency and accountability of public institutions.

To enable the equal, principled and timely exercise of the right to free access to public information, the Agency recognizes two key spheres of action, i.e. education and strengthening of public awareness of this constitutional fundamental human right and its application, among information requesters, that is, among the citizens.

Strategic goal 1 is planned to be accomplished by achieving the following results:

1.1. Increased awareness of the right to free access to public information among the information requesters.

– It refers to raising awareness and affirming the right to free access to public information. It is planned to be realized through a series of activities that include the implementation of campaigns and information to users through social and traditional media. With this result, the aim is to sensitize those seeking information about this right and to encourage the building of a positive climate, which will enable the consistent application of the right.

1.2. Information requesters know how the right to free access to public information is exercised.

– This result implies education and building the capacities of the users for exercising the right to free access to information of a public nature. Through training for specific target groups of information requesters, as well as through online e-education, the Agency will educate information requesters on how to exercise the right to free access to public information.

Intervention Logic	Indicator	Basic	Target Value	Verification Sources	Risks
SG1: Facilitating the application of the right to access public information.	Increased % of persons who use the right correctly of access to public information, by target groups: -Media, -Civil organizations, -Business community, -Other legal entities, -Natural persons.	To be determined (TBD)	Increased percentage of users up to 10% compared to the base year	Research, surveys, monitoring reports of the civil sector, etc.	Institutions are not prepared well and fail to follow and respond to the growing demand for access to public information.
R1.1:	The number of	TBD	At least 1 guest	Press	The users

<p>Enhanced awareness of the right to free access to public information, among information requesters (rights and obligations).</p>	<p>guest appearances in informative and educational shows and programs of traditional media.</p> <p>The number of visits to the Agency's website.</p> <p>The number of followers on social media.</p>		<p>appearance in informative and educational shows and programs of traditional media, on an annual basis.</p> <p>At least 2000 visits per year to the Agency's website.</p> <p>At least 1000 followers on social media.</p>	<p>clippings from public appearances</p> <p>Website visit counter.</p> <p>Social pages of the Agency.</p>	<p>are informed about the right to free access to public information and refer to it, but use it incorrectly.</p>
<p>Information requesters know how the right to free access to public information is exercised.</p>	<p>The number of conducted trainings and trained persons, according to the target group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media. - Civil organizations. -Business community. -Other legal entities. -Natural persons. 		<p>Conducted at least 2 trainings per year for information requesters, starting in 2022.</p> <p>Trained by the end of the period: at least 30 representatives of the media, 30 representatives of the civil sector, 100 representatives of the business community, and 100 individuals through e-learning modules.</p>	<p>Agenda of trainings, list of participants, evaluation of trainings.</p>	<p>Insufficient interest among information seekers to attend the trainings.</p>

Objective No. 2: Increasing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Holders of Public Information for Exercising the Right to Free Access to Information

Good international practices show that public information is clearly published and visible and can be quickly and easily found on the websites or portals of information holders. The visibility of the information is very important, both for the requesters and for the holders of the information, because it allows for reducing the steps for searching for the necessary information.

With the results and activities planned within this strategic goal, the intention is for the Agency to encourage proactivity among the holders of information and easy and timely availability of public information.

To facilitate the application and accessibility of the right to free access to information, the Agency, during the strategy implementation period, will focus on delivering two strategic results, that is, strengthening proactive and reactive transparency among information holders.

Strategic goal 2 is planned to be achieved through the realization of the following results:

2.1. Increased active transparency, accountability and proactivity among the holders of information and enabled access to quality and timely available public information.

– Refers to strengthening the incentives of information holders. To achieve the planned result, the Agency will work on educating the holders of information and will monitor the proactivity of the holders of public information, based on the Transparency Standards and through the application of a clear and publicly available Methodology for determining the index of transparency.

2.2. The administration's silence (tacit denials) has been reduced and support has been provided to promote the "reactive" transparency of public institutions.

– This result implies an analysis for an improved understanding of the reasons for the "silence of the administration", identifying and promoting/introducing good practices to improve reactive transparency, as well as educating the holders of information through training and various educational materials (manuals, guides, etc.).

Intervention Logic	Indicator	Basic	Target Value	Verification Sources	Risks
SG2: Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the holders of public information for exercising the right to free	Increased % of information that is regularly and timely published by the information holders publish. Increased % of	TBD	Increased percentage of information holders that regularly and in a timely manner publish public information, by at least 10%	Research, surveys, monitoring reports of the Agency and the civil sector, etc.	Citizens have no interest in the published information and do not recognize it as an

access to information.	publicly available information.		compared to the base year. At least a 10% increased percentage (relative to the base year) of publicly available information.		added value in the operation of the institutions.
R2.1: Increased active transparency, accountability and proactivity among the holders of information and enabling access to quality and timely available public information.	The number of trainings for information holders (by topic). The number of trained representatives from information holders. Established and functional E-portal for holders of public information.	TBD	Conducted at least 3 trainings per year for information holders. Trained at least 75 representatives of information holders annually. At least 50% of holders of public information regularly and proactively use the E-portal for holders of public information.	The Agenda of trainings, list of participants, and evaluation list of trainings. Electronic report (statistics) from the E-portal and "Analysis of the monitoring of the websites of the holders of public information".	Insufficient motivation and involvement of information holders for proactive reporting.
R2.2: Reduced silence of the administration (tacit denials) and provided support for the promotion of "reactive" transparency of public institutions.	The Number of conducted trainings and trained representatives of information holders. Number and type of prepared manuals and guides for promoting the reactive transparency of the institutions. The number of		Conducted at least 3 trainings per year for information holders. Trained at least 75 representatives of information holders annually. Prepared at least 2 rulebooks/guides to promote the reactive transparency of	Training agendas, a list of participants, training evaluation. Manuals/Guides/ Training Modules for formal primary and secondary education.	Insufficient interest among the holders of information for the application of the regulations/ guides and for attending the trainings.

	published analyses/reports on the transparency of public information holders.		the institutions. Prepared 2 modules (for primary and secondary education), to promote the transparency of public institutions.		
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Objective No. 3: Promotion of Policies and Practices for the Application of the Right to Free Access to Public Information

The current legal framework for the protection of the right to free access to public information shows a remarkable level of improvement. However, as with most legal solutions, in this case, too, the daily operation and application of the law indicate that it can and should be continuously improved, through the application of good practices and the creation of evidence-based policies.

bearing in mind the proactive and leading function of the Agency in enabling, encouraging and facilitating the application and exercise of the right to free access to information, accompanied by intensive data collection, progress monitoring, monitoring and reporting in this field, the institution has the main and necessary tools for the continuous improvement of policies and practices for the application of the right to free access to information.

Within this objective, the Agency will focus on monitoring and reporting, and on advancing policies and practice, through the creation of evidence-based solutions. In order to achieve the planned goal, the Agency will work on achieving the following results:

3.1. An established and functional system for monitoring the implementation of the decisions of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

- Within this result, the Agency will monitor the implementation of the decisions to protect the right to free access to information. To achieve this, the Agency will establish and ensure the consistent application of a Procedure for Monitoring the Implementation of Decisions, regularly use and update the document management system, and provide feedback from information seekers on the application of Article 27 of The Law on Free Access to Public Information.

3.2. Improved practical application of the legislation on the fulfilment of the right to free access to public information via evidence-based policy and practice revisions and additions.

- Carrying out policies based on evidence and good practices is one of the main shortcomings noted in international reports on monitoring the performance of public administration, at all levels and in all areas.

Bearing in mind this weakness, in the future, the Agency will focus on improving policies and practices (legal solutions) in the area of transparency and accountability of public institutions and will devote itself to ensuring that good practices and solutions are adequately reflected in possible legal amendments. and additions, as well as secondary legislation affecting the right to free access to public information.

Intervention Logic	Indicator	Basic	Target Value	Verification Sources	Risks
<p>SG3:</p> <p>Promotion of policies and practices for the application of the right to free access to information.</p>	<p>The number of legal amendments and solutions to improve access to the right to free access to public information, based on good practices and evidence.</p>	TBD	<p>Initiated/implemented at least 1 cycle of legal and/or by-law amendments, based on evidence and good practices, to promote the right to free access to public information.</p>	<p>EU Country Progress Report.</p> <p>Annual reports of the Agency.</p> <p>Reports of the civil sector.</p>	<p>Decision-makers are not ready and hardly accept changes and additions to the legal framework in the area of transparency of institutions.</p>
<p>R3.1:</p> <p>Established a functional system for monitoring the implementation of the decisions of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.</p>	<p>The number of procedures for monitoring the implementation of the Agency's decisions. Use of a data management system.</p> <p>Percentage of information seekers from whom feedback was provided for the implementation of the Agency's decisions.</p>	TBD	<p>Adopted procedure for monitoring the implementation of the Agency's decisions.</p> <p>A functional and regularly updated data management system has been established.</p> <p>At least 10% of the information seekers have provided feedback on the implementation of the Agency's decisions.</p>	<p>An annual report on the operation of the Agency.</p> <p>Other internal analyzes and reports of the Agency.</p>	<p>The Agency does not have enough and properly trained staff to be able to respond to the increasing number of analyses, monitoring reports and other documents through which the implementation of the Agency's decisions are monitored.</p>

R3.2: Improved practical application of the Law on exercising the right to free access to information, through evidence-based amendments and additions to policies and practices.	The number of issued "diagnostic" and monitoring reports identifying and proposing changes to policies and practices for the application of the law on free access to public information, based on evidence.	TBD	Prepared at least 1 "diagnostic"/monitoring report identifying and proposing changes to evidence-based policies and practices for the application of the law on free access to public information.	Agency reports and analyses.	The insufficient willingness of various stakeholders (requesters and holders of public information, and policymakers) to cooperate and participate in creating policies based on evidence and good practices.
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Strategic Priority 2

Strengthening the institutional capacity of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information

SG4: Strengthening human capacities and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's employees.	SG 5: Improvement of the technical-technological conditions for work in the Agency.
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R4.1: Established an effective system for continuous improvement of knowledge, as well as the skills and work of the Agency's employees.	R4.2: Increased visibility and recognition of the operation of the Agency by the general and professional public.	R4.3: Established cooperation and networking with the international institutions and donors, for the exchange of experiences and improvement of	R5.1: Applied modern tools and solutions for improving analytics, communication and information exchange, and for the more	R5.2: Improvement of systems and equipment with information and communication equipment.
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		operations.	efficient provision of the Agency's services.	
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Objective No. 4: Strengthening of the Human Capacities and Improvement of the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Agency's Employees

The Agency, immediately before the preparation of the Strategy, was faced with a process of transformation from a Commission to an Agency with expanded and changed competences, and with that, the need for restructuring and reform of the organizational set-up that would enable the institution to respond to the new legal requirements.

In the past period, through the Functional Analysis and the new acts for the systematization and organization of workplaces, a solid foundation has been established, which, complemented by this Strategy, should enable the further growth and development of the institution and its appropriate recognition and recognition as a key actor in the transparency and accountability of public institutions.

In order to enable the continuous upgrading and strengthening of the Agency's human capacities, which are necessary for the successful operation of the institution, as well as the inclusion of its extended competencies in accordance with the current Law, within the framework of this goal, the following results are expected to be realized:

4.1. Established an effective system for continuous improvement of the knowledge, skills and work of the employees of the Agency.

- The activities for achieving this result foresee the preparation of an analysis of the need for training, based on which, depending on the work processes and competencies of the institution, general (generic) training for all employees and specific training and other types of training will be defined and planned, mentored, and learned at the workplace, according to the specifics of certain job positions/units/sectors.

4.2. The Agency's efforts are more widely known and recognized by the public and the professional community.

- Bringing the work of the Agency closer to the professional and general public is key to the further success of the institution and to the promotion of the right of access to a free source of information. For this purpose, in the next period, the institution will focus on establishing a public relations function and improving the visibility of the Agency's work, which will bring it closer to the public on the one hand, and on the other hand will have a positive impact on the proactivity of both information requesters and information holders.

4.3. Established cooperation and networking with international institutions and donors, gaining experience and improving operations.

- Cooperation with international institutions and donors, as well as the participation and implementation of projects, are important for the continuous improvement of the institution's operations and its further successful positioning in front of various stakeholders who are affected by the process of transparency of public institutions and the exercise of the right to free access to public information. Within this goal, networking and cooperation with international institutions and organizations, exchange of experiences and good practices, and preparation, implementation and cooperation of various development projects are planned.

Intervention Logic	Indicator	Basic	Target Value	Verification Sources	Risks
SG4: Strengthening human capacities and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's employees.	% of employees who have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience for the efficient and effective performance of work tasks within the framework of the positions to which they are assigned; % of citizens who recognize the agency and its competencies; % of the Agency's annual program activities that are realized through cooperation with international organizations and institutions.	TBD	80% of employees meet the necessary knowledge, skills and experience for the efficient and effective performance of work tasks within the positions to which they are assigned; The percentage of citizens who recognize the agency and its competencies has increased by at least 10% (measured every 3 years); At least 10% of the program activities of the institution are realized in cooperation or	Annual employee evaluation, employee development plan, annual report on the operation of the Agency, surveys, researches, cooperation agreements with international institutions and organizations	The agency is not recognized and sufficiently represented in the donor community with support and development projects.

			through support from international organizations and institutions.		
R4.1: An effective system has been established for the continuous improvement of the knowledge, skills and work of the Agency's employees.	No. of prepared plans for building the capacities of employees, based on real needs and opportunities; Number of employees (annually) who participated in generic training (presentation and communication skills, management and leadership, strategic planning and management, project management planning...); No. of employees who have undergone training or other forms of learning for professional improvement and upgrading.	TBD	An analysis of training needs was made and a tool was established for self-updating it by the Agency's employees; All employees, at least once a year, have attended at least one generic (general) training; At least 50% of the employees during one year (100% coverage in a period of two years) attended at least one training or participated in a program for professional learning and advancement.	Analysis of training needs and tool for self-assessment of training needs, agenda, list of participants, evaluation of persons from attended training.	Due to regular obligations, employees are not able to take an active part in the planned training.
R4.2: Increased visibility and recognition of the Agency's work by the general and professional	No. on guest appearances in informative and educational shows and programs of traditional media; No.	TBD	At least 1 guest appearance in informative and educational shows and programs of traditional media, on	Press clippings from public appearances; Website visit counter; Social pages of the Agency.	Public relations activities are not implemented according to a clear communication strategy, so messages and

public.	visits to the Agency's website; No. of social media followers.		annual basis. At least 2000 visits per year to the Agency's website. At least 1500 social media followers.		information to the public is not consistent and does not produce the desired results.
R4.3: Established cooperation and networking with international institutions and donors, for the exchange of experiences and improvement of operations.	No. of organizations and donors with which the Agency cooperates (by years); No. of newly received projects (approved project support) by year.	TBD	At the end of implementing the strategy, the Agency has achieved cooperation with at least 5 different institutions, international organizations and projects; The Agency has received and implemented at least 1 project during the period of implementation of the Strategy.	Cooperation agreements and other documents.	The agency does not have enough employees that can quality and promptly support the function of networking, preparation of projects and realization of international cooperation.

Objective No. 5: Improvement of the Technical-Technological Conditions for Work in the Agency

The need for modernization and digitization of work processes, in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Agency's operations, is imposed by the modern conditions in which the institutions function, but it has become even more prominent and confirmed as inevitable during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The readiness of the institutions to respond with tools, systems and resources for communication and information has been shown to be a key indicator of "resilience" to the negative impacts of the pandemic and it has been established as necessary to prevent the negative impacts and increase the resistance of the institutions from the negative socio-economic impacts resulting from changed operating conditions in the external environment.

Realizing this, the Agency is already working and is dedicated to improving the technical-technological conditions for work, but in the future period it will further devote itself to this, through the realization of the following strategic results:

5.1. Application of modern tools and solutions for improved analytics, modern communication and information exchange, and for the more efficient provision of the Agency's services.

- Within this result, it is planned to achieve full functionality and continuous updating of existing systems and tools for communication and information exchange, as well as to define and develop new solutions that will enable easier and more efficient access to services and things that are under the authority of the Agency.

5.2. Improvement of systems and equipment with information and communication equipment.

– Continuous improvement of the equipment and systems used for information exchange (computer and other equipment for information-communication needs) is key for efficient and effective operation. Within this result, it is projected to develop a plan for procurement, maintenance and renewal of information and communication equipment, and to procure it continuously, in order to respond to the needs of the employees, according to their work tasks and responsibilities.

Intervention Logic	Indicator	Basic	Target Value	Verification Sources	Risks
SG5: Improvement of the technical and technological conditions for work in the Agency.	% of work processes and tasks that are digitized and are covered by electronic systems for their implementation.	TBD	By the end of the strategic period, up to 50% of the work processes in the Agency are digitized and carried out electronically.	Annual report on the operation of the Agency and other reports and documents.	Agency employees have difficulty accepting and regularly using electronic systems and solutions.
R5.1: Applied modern tools and solutions for improved analytics, communication and exchange	Number and type of software solutions prepared / regularly used and updated. No. of employees who	TBD	The agency has at least 3 software/digital solutions that are specially designed and adapted for the needs of the	Analyzes, reports and other types of documents	The systems and digital solutions that are designed especially for the needs of the organization,

of information, and for the more efficient provision of the Agency's services.	actively use the electronic solutions and tools available to the Agency.		operation. At the end of the strategic period, 100% of the employees for whom the digital solutions are intended use them regularly and correctly.		they are too expensive and the institution is not able to regularly update and maintain them. The agency does not have an ICT employee.
R5.2: Improvement of systems and equipment with information communication equipment.	No. and type of information and communication equipment purchased (by years).	TBD	Information and communication equipment is renewed gradually in its entirety in a cycle of 5 years.	Procurement plan, specification for procured equipment.	The agency fails to provide enough funds for continuous and timely equipping with ICT tools for work, which is further complicated by the lack of an ICT employee.

Methodology for Monitoring Progress in the Implementation of the Strategic Plan

In developing this new strategic plan, we are setting out an ambitious program for change that we believe will make a real difference in society, contributing to creating a climate of openness and accountability, as well as creating real opportunities for public participation.

As part of our comprehensive strategic plan to protect the right to access public information, we have also developed an implementation monitoring methodology that will help us assess progress in achieving the goals set out in the strategic plan and the impact of our work. This methodology includes plans for collecting measurable indicators and acting on them, including feedback to interested parties, requesters and holders of public information.

Every year, it is our obligation to report on the progress in the implementation of our Strategic Plan and the achieved indicators in the Annual Report to the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The monitoring methodology monitors and reports on the progress in the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan during its duration. The action plan is planned in annual cycles and is adjusted at the same periodicity based on monitoring data collected either by the team or through external experts. Moreover, the monitoring methodology describes the process of monitoring implementation, including surveillance missions.

Integral:

The methodology is provided in a separate document, which is an integral part of the Strategic Plan of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information 2021-2025.

Annex A. Methodology for the Process of Developing a Strategic Plan for the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information

The strategic planning process, in its simplest terms, is the method that institutions use to develop plans for achieving overall, long-term goals. The current practice indicates that institutions in the performance of their competences achieve much higher performance if they have and implement a strategic approach in their operations.

Moreover, the strategic plan is an initial component of the planning process of any institution and it is complete when it originates and includes a wider range of interested parties and stakeholders. The time horizon for the strategic plan is usually five years with accompanying short-term, medium-term and long-term activities, but in our country a three-year time horizon of strategies is very often found.

The strategic planning and implementation process includes five stages:

Strategic Planning Stages
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>Preparation of the strategic planning process.</i>2. <i>Data collection and analysis.</i>3. <i>Development of the draft Strategy, AP and Methodology for monitoring.</i>4. <i>Finalization/presentation to interested/involved parties.</i>5. <i>Implementation of the Strategic Plan.</i>

1. Phases and steps in the strategic planning process

Phase 1: Preparation of the strategic planning process

1. Defining methodology
2. Preparation of a map for the strategic planning process

Phase 2: Data collection and analysis

3. Study of relevant documents for the strategy, analysis of secondary data, provided by the responsible persons
4. Determining a list of interested/involved parties in the strategic planning process
5. Conduct focus groups for discussion with individual interested/involved parties
6. Key interviews with the responsible persons in the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information
7. Analysis of the collected primary data from focus groups and interviews with key persons in the process

Phase 3: Development and preparation of the first draft of the Strategy, the Action Plan (AP) and the Monitoring Methodology

8. Preparation of the first version of the Strategic Plan
9. Sharing the first version of the plan with the employees of the Agency
10. Entering the remarks, comments in the Strategy
11. Preparation of the first version of the Action Plan and Methodology for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and AP
12. Presentation of the Action Plan - AP and Methodology to the employees of the Agency
13. Entering the remarks, comments in the Action Plan and Methodology

Phase 4: Finalization and presentation of documents to interested / involved parties

14. Organizing and presenting the Strategy, AP and Methodology for monitoring an event organized by the Agency, entering any comments

Phase 5: Training for the implementation of the Strategic and AP by years

15. Training of responsible persons on methods and tools for implementation
16. Annual monitoring of the set indicators for monitoring implementation

2. Relevant documents in the secondary analysis

Analysis of secondary data for the strategy, analysis of secondary data provided by the responsible persons:

- Law on free access to public information (Official Gazette of RSM No. 101/2019),
- Instructions for the application of the Law on Free Access to Information (Official Gazette of RSM No. 60/2020),
- Rules for the work of the misdemeanor commission,
- Law on general administrative procedure,
- Offenses Act,
- Rulebook for the internal organization of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information,
- Rulebook for the systematization of jobs in the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information,
- Functional analysis of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

3. The list of interested / involved parties in the strategic planning process

Proposal: Via ZOOM session of 60 min. – discussion by 6-8 participants on a maximum of 5-6 questions.

1. Focus group for discussion with the employees of the Agency	2. Focus group for discussion with the holders of information	3. Focus group for discussion with the holders of information (with the exceptions of SPI)	4. Focus group for discussion with information seekers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministry of Local Self-Government ▪ Ministry of Finance ▪ Ministry of Health ▪ Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning ▪ Inspection council ▪ City of SKOPJE ▪ Chamber of Commerce of Macedonia ▪ State Environmental Inspectorate ▪ Supreme Court of RSM ▪ Higher Administrative Court of the Republic of North Macedonia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministry of Defense ▪ Ministry of Internal Affairs ▪ Ministry of Justice ▪ Administration for execution of sanctions ▪ Min. for information society and administration ▪ State Administrative Inspectorate ▪ Directorate for Security of Classified Information ▪ General Secretariat ▪ Personal data protection agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NGO - Center for Civil Communications ▪ NGO - ESE ▪ NGO - FOOM ▪ OSCE mission - donor ▪ NDI - donor ▪ experts/ professor ▪ The Association of Journalists ▪ Journalists

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administrative Court of the Republic of North Macedonia ▪ Administrative Court of the Republic of North Macedonia ▪ Ombudsman of RSM ▪ AD with public interest - EVN, BEG ▪ Bureau for representation of RSM before the European Court of Human Rights 		
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Annex B. Strategic Planning Process

The current practice indicates that institutions in the performance of their competences achieve much higher performance if they have and implement a strategic approach in their operations.

The strategic plan is an initial component of the planning process of any institution and it is complete when it originates and includes a wider range of interested parties and stakeholders.

The time horizon for the strategic plan is usually five years with accompanying short-term, medium-term and long-term activities, but in our country a three-year time horizon of strategies is very often found.

The strategic planning and implementation process includes five stages:

Strategic Planning Stages
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Organizing forces/activities</i> 2. <i>Making a resource analysis</i> 3. <i>Creating a strategy</i> 4. <i>Implementing a strategic plan</i> 5. <i>Revision of the strategic plan</i>

Step 1. Organizing the activities, creating a work team and partner networks

The success of the implementation of a strategy depends on the success of the joint actions of all employees, appointed persons as well as external collaborators. The agency begins the strategic planning process by identifying people on the strategic planning task force. In principle,

an official decision is made by the management about who is included in this work team. This includes possible agreements and Memorandums of cooperation with international institutions or domestic organizations to support the process, through expert/consultant, financial support of the process itself.

Step 2. Making an analysis of institutional resources and external factors

Knowing the context of the Agency's operations and competences is of great importance for determining a strategy. The comprehensive assessment will use available quantitative and qualitative public sector knowledge, skills and other resources to help identify a strategic direction for development. This information will also direct activities in a direction that will contribute to increasing efficiency, transparency and access to information as one of the basic constitutional human rights.

SWOT analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is a tool that can be used to analyze data in order to create a competitive analysis.

Step 3. Creating a Strategic Plan

As in comprehensive strategic plans, the intention is to take a holistic approach to development and progress in this area. The strategic plan has a number of components which are listed below.

ELEMENTS OF A STRATEGIC PLAN	
<i>Element</i>	<i>Description</i>
Vision	Describes the consensus of stakeholders about the desired future
Mission	It shows how, with what means and available resources the vision will be achieved
Strategic Goals	Even more specific, time-bound and measurable (SMART) parameters. They establish standards for implementation and target activities for development; Their intention is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to use the strengths, • to overcome weaknesses, • to take advantage of the opportunities, • to cooperate with the assumed and identified dangers at the time in which the Strategic Plan is implemented.
Specific Activities	The concrete activities implement the specific components of the programs, with the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assigned responsible entities,

- assumed costs-budgets,
- time-limited and measurable according to indicators.

Step 4: Implementation of the Strategic Plan

The implementation of the strategic plan is foreseen by the Action Plans, that is, the activities for the selected projects that have a greater consensus among the interested parties, and which is actually the driving force for the implementation process. The action plans determine the hierarchy of the task, the responsible entities, the actual time schedule, the possible resources, the expected impacts and results, the measures for achievement and the system for progress, control and evaluation. Capacity building can be an important element for strengthening the ability of individuals and persons for the purpose of development and ultimate goal - achievement of results.

The development of techniques for good monitoring and evaluation of the overall strategy is an important point in order to measure the results, justify the costs, determine and enter the necessary corrections in the entire system, as well as alignments and development of good practices. Therefore, this strategic plan of the Agency will also have a Methodology for monitoring the implementation, with clearly defined, measurable, realistic indicators.

Step 5: Revision of the Strategic Plan

The revision of the Strategic Plan should be done at least once a year. This should include a review of resource utilization, timelines, monitoring of evaluation indicators, and resources available for strategic efforts. This procedure should cover not only the results but also the implementation process, the level of participation, the dynamics of changing the laws.