

15th Anniversary

OF THE PARTICIPATORY FORUM
FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE
REALIZATION OF RIGHTS OF THE
COMMUNITIES

2011-2025



FROM CONCEPT TO IMPLEMENTATION

The Republic of North Macedonia has established a comprehensive legal framework and a broad range of institutions dedicated to the promotion and protection of rights of persons belonging to the communities. Nevertheless practice has imposed the need for the establishment of a consultative and advisory body that would enable persons belonging to the communities to participate actively in policy-design and decision-making processes.



Recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life, 1999

The mechanism established with the Participatory Forum derives from the Lund Recommendations, according to which States should establish advisory or consultative bodies within appropriate institutional frameworks to serve as channels for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities.



Constitutive Meeting of the Participatory Forum
14 December 2011

In 2011, supported by the OSCE Mission to Skopje, the Agency for Community Rights Realization launched an initiative for the establishment of a Participatory Forum for the promotion of the realization of rights of the communities. The Forum enables persons belonging to the communities to directly communicate, engage in a dialogue and cooperate with state administration bodies and to actively and effectively participate in policy and decision-making processes.



Ambassador Kilian Wahl, Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje

“For more than a decade, the Mission has proudly supported the Participatory Forum, a unique platform that brings together diverse communities, strengthens dialogue, and contributes to a more inclusive and cohesive society.”



Dalibor Kitanović, Director of the Agency for Community Rights Realization

“The Participatory Forum is a significant driving force in advancing reputation of the Republic of North Macedonia within the European Union, as well as in raising the awareness of the necessity to improve the position of smaller communities and to ensure their active involvement in shaping policies and in decision-making processes.”

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY OF WORK



“

The Agency for Community Rights Realization is part of the group of rare institutions in Europe that has brought to life and implemented the recommendation for the establishment of this type of an advisory body.

”

Alan Phillips

visionary, and founder
of the Forum 1947–2023



Legal Framework:

The Participatory Forum was established pursuant to the “Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Members of the Communities Which Are Less than 20% in the Population in the Republic of Macedonia” (2008). The role of the Forum was further strengthened in 2020, after the adoption of the Law on the Rights of the Communities that are Less Than 20% of the Population of the Republic of North Macedonia.



Mission:

Promotion of the realization of rights of the communities through enhanced participation of persons belonging to communities in policy and decision-making processes, as well as through the exchange of positive experiences and best practices in the area of promotion and protection of rights of the communities.



Methodology of Work:

The Participatory Forum is an informal, advisory, and consultative body that is independent from the Agency for Community Rights Realization.

It is composed of up to 35 members, as follows: representatives of central-level line institutions, having the mandate to work in the area of promotion, realization, and protection of rights of the communities and representatives of civil society organizations whose strategic objective and mission include the protection, advancement, and realization of rights of the communities, as well as the promotion of interethnic relations and social cohesion.

The Participatory Forum, *inter alia*, is to participate in drafting of and raising initiatives for new legislation, review of draft laws and government programmes of importance to the protection and promotion of rights of the communities; define priorities, conduct research, and educate the public at large; decide on the funding of, monitor and evaluate relevant programmes and support the cooperation between central and local level authorities and international cooperation.

State administration
bodies and central-
level institutions
represented in the
Participatory Forum



Associations of
citizens represented
in the Forum include:

Agency for Community Rights Realization; 2) Committee on Inter-Community Relations at the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia; 3) Ministry for Inter-Community Relations; 4) Ministry of Education and Science; 5) Directorate for the Promotion and Advancement of the Culture of Community Members at the Ministry for Inter-Community Relations; 6) Directorate for the Development and Advancement of Education in the Languages of Community Members at the Ministry for Inter-Community Relations; 7) Ministry of Justice; 8) the Office of the Ombudsperson; 9) Commission for the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination; 10) Ministry of European Affairs; 11) Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade; 12) Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth; 13) Ministry of Local Self-Government; 14) National Coordinator for the National Roma Strategy; and 15) Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

1) the Bosniak, 2) the Roma, 3) the Serbian, 4) the Turkish, 5) the Vlach, and 6) other communities living in the Republic of North Macedonia.

KEY OUTCOMES

The Participatory Forum has considerable influence in lobbying for initiatives and solutions aimed at advancing and promoting the protection of rights of smaller communities, while directly and indirectly contributing to the design of policies pursued by the line institutions. Thus, the Participatory Forum has made a substantial contribution to:

- Strengthening the capacities and co-operation of civil society organizations for the implementation of joint projects.
- Establishing the Fund under the Agency for Community Rights Realization to support programmes and projects advancing the rights of communities and promoting inter-ethnic relations.
- Integrating pilot instruction in the Bosnian language into regular curriculum-based education.
- Introduction of elective subjects: “Language and Culture of the Serbs” and “Language and Culture of the Turks”.
- Increasing the number of textbooks for instruction in the languages of the communities, both under regular curricula and elective subjects.
- Supporting the adoption of the National Strategies for Interculturalism.
- Establishing the new public broadcasting service MTV4 and increased broadcasting of programmes in the Bosnian, Romani, Serbian, Turkish and Vlach languages.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS- STEPS FOR THE FUTURE

- A comprehensive review of the methodology of work of the Participatory Forum.
- Ensuring greater and proactive involvement of civil society organizations and public institutions.
- Consolidated communication and cooperation with government institutions with a view to increasing the degree of implementation of recommendations of the Participatory Forum.
- Encouraging institutions to support projects promoting the implementation of the Participatory Forum recommendations.
- Raising the visibility of the Forum through regular press releases, more active use of social networks, and media outreach in the languages of smaller communities.

MEETINGS of the Participatory Forum 2011–2025

2011	Constitutive Meeting of the Participatory Forum
2012	▪ Fair and equitable representation of the communities, non-discrimination, human rights, and policing ▪ The state of education and upbringing of members of the communities representing less than 20% of the population in the Republic of North Macedonia
2013	▪ Amendments and interpretation of legislation relating to the communities and identification of mechanisms for communication between the communities and state administration bodies ▪ Access of members of the communities to the media and Analysis of the situation of civil society organizations whose Statutes include the mandate to undertake activities with respect to the promotion and protection of members of the communities ▪ Fair and equitable representation of members of the communities ▪ Implementation of the right of effective participation of the communities in cultural life
2014	▪ Access to funds and grants supporting civil society organizations coming from the communities ▪ Realization and protection of rights of the communities at the local level ▪ Exercise of the right to media access and the right to information of the communities at the local level ▪ Assessment of the level of implementation of the right of the communities to participate in cultural life at the local level
2015	▪ Planning session for members of the Participatory Forum ▪ Multiculturalism and integration in a society founded on diversity ▪ Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities ▪ Advancement of the legal and institutional framework for the realization of rights of the communities
2017	▪ Advancing the efficiency of the Participatory Forum and designing a framework for future activities ▪ Improving the quality of education in the languages of members of the communities

2018	▪ Support to the Ministry of Culture in the realization and promotion of cultural rights of the communities ▪ Fair and equitable representation of the communities at the national level ▪ Fair and equitable representation of the communities at the local level
2019	▪ Legal framework and the importance of the population census for members of the communities ▪ Draft text of the National Strategy for development of the 'One society for all' concept and interculturalism
2021	▪ Financing of civil society organizations ▪ Youth participation and youth activism ▪ Functionality of Commissions for Inter-Community Relations
2022	▪ Results of the 2021 population census and its implications for smaller communities and for social cohesion ▪ Analysis of the situation with education in the languages of smaller communities ▪ Rights of smaller communities and the National Strategy for 'One society for all' and interculturalism
2023	▪ Retreat session for assessment of the functionality of the Participatory Forum ▪ Prevention of and protection against discrimination on grounds of ethnic belonging ▪ Political participation of women from the communities in North Macedonia: Opportunities and challenges ▪ Session for verification of preliminary findings under the Analysis of the functionality of the Participatory Forum
2024	▪ Analysis of the functionality, effectiveness, and achievements of the Participatory Forum
2025	▪ The role of non-majority communities in strengthening social cohesion - Council of Europe

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