



SIGMA

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FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

POLICY-MAKING AND CO-ORDINATION

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Introduction

Important improvements have been introduced since Sigma's previous (June 2006) assessment report on Policy-Making and Co-ordination in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹. The regulatory impact assessment (RIA) requirement has been explicitly introduced in the Rules of Procedure. The "Regulatory Guillotine" initiative has yielded significant results – 341 pieces of secondary legislation have been abolished. A Single Electronic Register of Regulations has been established, including all valid legislation in the various policy areas. Citizens and businesses will have access to the Electronic Register through the government website.

The strategic planning and policy co-ordination systems in Macedonia have continued to develop. With some stagnation in 2006, the strategic planning process is back on track. There is a clear understanding of the importance of the process, and some core planning teams are emerging in ministries. The General Secretariat has strengthened its role as a co-ordinating and advisory body. The decision-making mechanisms are effective.

1. Coherence of the Policy-Making Framework

The legal framework for decision-making and policy formulation is set by the *Rules of Procedure for Operation of the Government*. Numerous amendments have been made since 2001 when the Rules of Procedure were first adopted. Some amendments have been of a technical nature and some substantive, supporting significant reforms in the work of the government.

The *Rules of Procedure* set the framework for an effective policy-planning system, ensuring links to the political priorities established by the government upon its election through the annual process of strategic planning and budgeting and translated into specific legislation presented in the Annual Work Programme. The Rules of Procedure also set up a clear and coherent decision-making system by clearly describing the responsibilities and roles of both administrative and political levels. The weekly meetings of state secretaries and the meetings of standing government commissions are effective mechanisms for the deliberation and resolution of any outstanding issues related to ministry proposals. The most recent amendments to the Rules of Procedure, adopted in February 2008, have introduced compulsory regulatory impact assessment (RIA) and increased efficiency in the operation of the government through electronically-supported procedures.

A number of important documents supporting the strategic planning and policy co-ordination systems have been adopted by the government. The *Methodology on Strategic Planning and Preparation of the Annual Work Programme of the Government* was followed by a *Strategic Planning Handbook* (February 2007), intended to support ministries and other state administration bodies in their planning process. The *Methodology on Policy Analysis and Co-ordination*, adopted in 2006, was followed by the *Policy Development Handbook* (January 2007), which describes the full policy process, methods and techniques

¹ In this report the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will hereafter be referred to as "Macedonia".

supporting the process, and outputs produced at each step of the policy process. The *Methodology on Regulatory Impact Assessment* and its supporting forms were adopted in March 2008.

The overall legal framework for the decision-making process is coherent and complete. The decision-making process – including the strategic planning and development of proposals in ministries, coordination, and monitoring by the General Secretariat are adequate and accepted by all participants.

2. Inter-ministerial Consultation on Policy Proposals

The Rules of Procedure require proposing ministries submitting legislative drafts or other materials to the government to consult other “responsible, relevant and interested state administration bodies and other state bodies”. Depending on the issue, consultations include the ministries of Finance, Justice, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Environment and Spatial Planning, the Committee for Protection of Competition, the Secretariat for Implementation of the Framework Agreement, and the Legislative Secretariat. In practice, the comments of the Ministry of Finance and the Legislative Secretariat are compulsory. With the latest amendments to the Rules of Procedure, the deadline for obtaining or giving comments on a proposal going to the government has been shortened from 10 to 7 days. After expiry of the deadline, the proposing ministry can submit the proposal to the General Secretariat for inclusion on the agenda of the meeting of the General Collegium of State Secretaries.

Formal checks are made by the staff in the General Secretariat, and in the case of an incomplete dossier, they recommend which additional documents should be submitted. However, the General Secretariat does not have the authority to return the documents. The proposals are then discussed in the meeting of the General Collegium of State Secretaries, which may decide to defer an issue if the relevant and interested parties have not been consulted.

Policy proposals are rarely prepared prior to legislative drafts, so there is no opportunity for substantive consultations in the policy development stage. Most of the consultations take place only after draft legislative proposals have been developed. The shortened deadlines for obtaining comments from interested stakeholders might further reduce the quality of consultations. Broader consultations, involving NGOs and other relevant stakeholders, are rarely organised.

The formal procedures for inter-ministerial consultations are appropriate. The General Secretariat should encourage ministries and other state administration bodies to improve the process and start the consultations earlier so that, apart from legislative matters, the consultations can focus on substantive policy issues.

3. Work Planning

The Annual Work Programme includes legislative proposals and other materials that are planned to be presented to the government for deliberation and decision in the following year. According to the timetable set in the *Methodology on Strategic Planning and Preparation of the Annual Work Programme*, the Annual Work Programme is adopted by the government at the end of the current year for the next year. The 2008 Annual Work Programme was adopted by the government in January. The government’s strategic priorities, the commitments in the National Plan for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA), and the strategic priorities and programmes of the relevant ministry are expected to guide the ministries when drafting their proposed initiatives to be included in the Annual Work Programme. However, inconsistencies among the key planning documents still occur (see Section 7 below).

The General Secretariat is responsible for monitoring the Annual Work Programme. It prepares an Annual Report on the level of implementation of the Annual Work Programme, including an assessment of implementation by each ministry. After a break of one year, the Early Warning Reports have recently been reintroduced. These reports, which include an overview of the proposals planned for the coming quarter, are distributed to all ministries, reminding them of their commitments. A quarterly report on implementation, together with the Early Warning Report, is submitted to the government.

The agenda of the weekly meeting of the government is proposed by the Secretary General and approved by the Prime Minister. The agenda is structured in three parts: (1) issues for deliberation and decision; (2) issues that have been previously resolved in the commissions and need only a decision; and (3) issues for information. This structure is intended to focus ministers’ attention on important issues that require policy or political resolution. Cases of ministers presenting proposals directly to the government meeting are rare.

The number of items per government meeting is normally about 50 to 60. This is quite a high number, and it could be an indication of a very ambitious agenda of the government or of an overburdened agenda with less relevant, often administrative, issues that could be delegated and resolved at lower levels in the decision-making process. Whatever the reason, the government should find a way to focus on the important policy and political issues needing substantive deliberation and decision.

The planning and monitoring of government work provides a good framework for ensuring that government priorities will be addressed adequately. The General Secretariat should encourage ministries to streamline internal planning procedures in order to ensure consistency among the key planning documents. The government should take steps towards delegating issues to lower levels in the decision-making process so that it could focus on important policy discussions and decisions.

4. Dispute-resolution Mechanisms

Once the proposals reach the General Secretariat for presentation to the government, there are two levels in place to resolve disputes among ministries. The first level is the weekly meeting of the General Collegium of State Secretaries (chaired by the General Secretary of the Government), which constitutes a forum where proposals are reviewed from an expert point of view. The Collegium may defer an issue if additional co-ordination and consultations are needed. Senior members of staff of the General Secretariat participate in the meetings and may present their views on specific proposals. If no agreement is reached, this is indicated in a report, which is then presented to the standing government commissions. Recommendations formulated in the meeting of the General Collegium of State Secretaries are submitted in written form to the standing government commissions for further deliberation and decision.

The second level includes the standing commissions, which are ministerial commissions organised by topic – political system, economic system and policy, and human resources and sustainable development. They meet on a specific day before the weekly meeting of the government to discuss and resolve issues that were not previously resolved. It sometimes happens, however, that commission meetings are not attended by ministers, but by civil servants appointed to represent the views of the ministry. As civil servants, even those having the relevant expertise, have no authority to decide on substantial policy or political issues, this approach reduces the effectiveness of the commission. A report is prepared and distributed after the meeting of each of the standing commissions, together with the materials for the government meeting.

According to the *Rules of Procedure* and the *Methodology on Policy Analysis and Co-ordination*, the General Secretariat may offer relevant information and assist ministries in dispute resolution in the development stage of major legislative proposals or policies. Although state advisors in the General Secretariat have been appointed as contact persons for specific ministries and tasked with the responsibility of reviewing the ministries' proposals, their role as mediators in the event of a dispute is usually minimal. In practice, they focus mostly on checking the formal requirements related to the proposals.

The formal mechanisms for resolving disputes are appropriate. The General Secretariat should develop a more substantive role in offering advice and assisting in conflict-resolution at an early stage in the policy development process.

5. Central Co-ordination Capacity

The General Secretariat has a leading co-ordinative role in the decision-making process. It provides logistical and technical support to the sessions of the government. The General Secretariat also provides logistical and technical support to the Collegium of State Secretaries and to each of the standing government commissions. The General Secretariat's work in the handling of documents and their distribution to the sessions of all bodies involved in the decision-making process is quite effective. All materials that arrive for scheduling on the agenda of the next meeting of the government are then reviewed at the weekly meeting of the General Secretariat. A brief conclusion is formulated for the Secretary General concerning each of the materials in terms of its completeness or any pending issues.

Another body playing a co-ordinative role is the Legislative Secretariat. The Legislative Secretariat is an independent expert service that offers legal advice to the government. It has specific responsibility for reviewing all draft laws and secondary legislation from a juridical and constitutional standpoint to ensure their coherence and consistency within the body of normative acts. The Legislative Secretariat has issued a *Handbook on Legislative Drafting* and has organised relevant training. It operates a website where ministries

and other state administration bodies can find useful information and advice on legislative drafting and other normative issues.

Since the beginning of 2007, the handling of documents has been supported by special software, which enables electronic processing and distribution of documents to state secretaries and ministers. Unfortunately, this new system is not yet fully operational. The provisions relating to the “e-government session”, introduced with the latest amendments to the Rules of Procedure, will be applicable as from January 2009.

The General Secretariat is also responsible for recording all government decisions and for monitoring their implementation. The decisions of the government are recorded and distributed to all ministries and relevant state administration bodies within 24 hours of the meeting of the government. The implementation of decisions is monitored and early warning letters are distributed to ministries reminding them of their commitments. The government reviews overdue commitments in a special meeting scheduled once a month.

The General Secretariat has direct responsibility for some horizontal issues, such as public administration reform and regulatory reform. Amendments to the Law on Government introduced in September 2007 transformed the General Secretariat’s former Sector for Implementation of the Framework Agreement into an autonomous secretariat under the political leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for implementation of the Framework Agreement.

The logistical and technical support for the business of government is orderly and quite effective.

6. Central Capacity to Advise on Policy and Strategic Matters

The General Secretariat is playing an increasingly significant role in helping the government adopt strategic plans and create linkages between priorities and the budget. The strategic planning process represents a full planning cycle linking the government’s strategic priorities to the budget, which are then reflected in the strategic plans of ministries, and finally presented as concrete proposals in the government’s Annual Work Programme.

The Strategic Planning Sector is responsible for co-ordination of the strategic planning process and for supporting ministries in the development of their own strategic plans and providing relevant training. The *Strategic Planning Handbook* adopted by the Secretary General in February 2007 and recent amendments in the structure of the strategic plans of ministries contribute to strengthening the process in ministries. The recent amendments in the relevant regulations require ministries and other bodies to establish an organisational unit responsible for strategic planning and policy co-ordination, which is to report directly to the state secretary in the ministry. Although there is some core strategic planning capacity in ministries, significant efforts are needed to develop sustainable capacity throughout the administration and in the General Secretariat. All ministries have prepared their 2008-2010 Strategic Plans, but with varying quality.

Although important, the role of the General Secretariat is more focused on supporting strategic planning and policy co-ordination processes rather than offering substantive advice to the government on the strategic implications of proposals. State advisors in the General Secretariat have been given the responsibility of advising on the specific proposals of ministries, but in practice substantive strategic and policy advice remains weak.

The Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) is relatively small, with about 20 staff, most of whom are civil servants. The Prime Minister also has a number of national and international political advisers who, on request, offer advice on specific issues, but they are not part of his permanent team. Generally, the PMO offers expert advice on specific issues rather than strategic advice. The Head of the PMO attends the weekly government meetings. The PMO offers advice on specific proposals, communicates and co-ordinates with ministries on specific projects or issues, and offers administrative support to the Prime Minister. It also ensures the transparency of the Prime Minister’s work and implements projects of special interest to the Prime Minister. In co-operation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the PMO plans the Prime Minister’s visits abroad and also deals with requests or questions coming from citizens.

The General Secretariat has the legal underpinnings and the organisational structure that allow it to play a significant role in providing strategic and policy advice. The General Secretariat should develop its capacity to provide substantive strategic and policy advice, and embed this function within its organisational structure.

7. Co-ordination of European Affairs

The Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA), established by the amendments to the Law on Government of June 2005, is an autonomous expert body of the government responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring and reporting on progress in the EU integration process. It is led by the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for European Integration.

The new structure of the SEA reflects its key responsibilities, which include co-ordination of the NPAA, institution-building, co-ordination of EU funds and other foreign assistance, and support to the future negotiation team. Only one-third of the planned 210 positions have been filled with full-time or temporary staff. The position of state secretary has not been filled since the SEA's establishment in 2005, and most of the middle-management positions are still vacant. This staffing problem has a serious impact on the functioning of the SEA, as it impedes vertical co-ordination and requires the involvement of the Deputy Prime Minister in the day-to-day administrative and co-ordination activities.

The National Plan for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA) was adopted in April 2007. It fully incorporates the commitments and responsibilities of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and the European Partnership. It seems, however, that there are still some inconsistencies between the NPAA, the Annual Work Programme of the government and the budget, which may create confusion. To avoid such inconsistencies, the planning procedures and their timing should be streamlined. The NPAA is regularly monitored and it is updated annually to reflect progress in implementation and emerging priorities.

EU issues are a standing item on the agenda of the General Collegium of State Secretaries and of the government, and EU thematic meetings are regularly organised to discuss progress. In the absence of a state secretary in SEA, a state advisor appointed by the Deputy Prime Minister attends meetings of the General Collegium. SEA staff are regularly involved in the consultative process for ministries' proposals going to the government.

All ministries have an organisational unit responsible for EI co-ordination, but capacities in some ministries are still weak. The 35 working groups originally established to focus mainly on law approximation have been gradually assuming more responsibilities for policy analysis related to the relevant chapters of the *acquis*. However, capacities in the various working groups are not evenly distributed, and it seems that tasks are performed by a small number of capable but overburdened people. Together with the updates of the NPAA, the SEA assesses and identifies the need for strengthening capacities in the administration through new recruitment in some of the key policy sectors.

The requirement to ensure the compatibility of national legislation with the EU *acquis* has now been fully implemented. The Legislative Secretariat checks proposals related to both primary and secondary legislation, offering advice to ministries in terms of the compatibility of the transposed legislation. The Statement of Harmonisation and the Tables of Concordance have been improved and are now compulsory for all EU-related proposals going to the government.

The structures responsible for management and co-ordination of activities related to EU accession are adequate. Top and middle-management positions in the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) should be filled in order to ensure better co-ordination and the Secretariat's smooth operation. More efforts should be focused on ensuring the consistency of the key programming documents, including the government's Annual Work Programme, the NPAA, the ministries' strategic plans, and the budget, thus fully incorporating EU issues into the policy system.

8. Involvement of the Council of Ministers in Budget Decisions

Once the Decision on strategic priorities is adopted by the middle of April, the Ministry of Finance begins the budget process by developing a mid-term Fiscal Strategy. The Fiscal Strategy presents an overview of the macroeconomic framework and includes projections of the basic indicators for the next year. It reports on budget revenues and expenditures in the current year and provides projections for the next year. The Fiscal Strategy sets the general spending ceilings for the next year, and offers indicative ceilings for the following two years. The government adopts the Fiscal Strategy by the end of May.

The Ministry of Finance then sets the spending ceilings for each of the ministries, and releases the Budget Circular Letter to all ministries and budget-users, which includes the government programmes and forms for the budget submissions. The Ministry of Finance releases the Budget Circular Letter by 15 June. Together with the budget submission, each ministry is required to submit its three-year strategic plan, showing the

relevant programmes, which reflect government priorities, and indicating how the ministry plans to spend the budget within the set limits. Ministries and other budget-users submit their budget submissions and strategic plans by 1 September.

The next step in the process involves the negotiations with ministries. The budget analysts in the Ministry of Finance, each of whom is responsible for a specific ministry and other budget-users, discuss and assist in the allocation of funds. This stage should be completed at the latest by 1 November, when the Ministry of Finance submits the proposed budget to the government. The negotiations continue in the government sessions, where the government finally decides on the priority programmes and the budget allocations. The State Budget is adopted by parliament by the end of the year.

The budget process and its steps are quite clear and understood by all players, although the deadlines are not always met.

The mechanisms for the government's collective discussions and decisions on the budget are adequate and effective. The government should consider moving the deadlines for each of the steps in the process to dates earlier in the year so as to allow more time for planning and negotiations.

9. Impact Assessment

In accordance with the existing provisions in the Rules of Procedure, ministers are required to provide an assessment of fiscal impacts and other economic, societal and environmental impacts. The results of these analyses are summarised in the standardised Fiscal Impact Assessment Form and the Memorandum that have to be submitted with all of the proposals presented to the government for decision. The Memorandum has fixed headings covering the justification of the proposal, options considered, results of impact assessments for each of the options, results of the consultations, harmonisation with EU legislation, and key communication messages. Ministries generally comply with the requirements, but only formally and without an in-depth impact analysis.

Recent amendments to the Rules of Procedure require ministries to perform and submit regulatory impact assessment (RIA) with proposed laws. The government adopted a Methodology on Regulatory Impact Assessment and the supporting forms in March 2008. The provisions in the Rules of Procedure related to the RIA will be applicable as from January 2009.

Each ministry will be required to identify the laws that will need RIA and to make a preliminary assessment of its depth (initial or extensive RIA) on the principle of proportionality. The initial planning stage will be followed by detailed planning, including identification of the needed resources and of the stakeholders who will be involved in the process. This information is to be presented in an Implementation Plan on RIA, consisting of two sections – the first section will be published in the Single Electronic Register of Regulations (see Section 11 below), thus ensuring transparency; the second section will include detailed plans on the resources needed, the timelines and implementation steps. This section is intended for internal use in the ministry and in the government. The planning will be performed in parallel with the process for development of the government's Annual Work Programme.

The initial RIA includes initial situation analysis, possible options for resolving the issue, and the impacts of each of the options in terms of expected fiscal impacts, benefits and risks, as well as impacts on society, the economy and the environment. The extensive RIA is optional but, depending on the expected impacts and the complexity of the proposal, the General Secretariat may recommend that an extensive RIA be carried out.

The General Secretariat has a consultative and co-ordinative role in the RIA process. The Sector for Economic Policies and Regulatory Reform will be responsible for checking and advising ministries on RIA. Although formally within the structure of the General Secretariat, in reality the Sector Head reports directly to the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Economic Affairs. This arrangement might lead to a fragmentation of the functions of the General Secretariat and affect the sustainability of support for the RIA process.

It is planned that initially the Sector will focus mostly on economic impacts, primarily with the aim of supporting regulatory reform (see Section 10 below). The Sector is aware that introducing RIA will require significant efforts, especially in terms of developing capacities in ministries. To support the process, a number of training events for staff in ministries and a Handbook on RIA introducing key assessment techniques are planned.

The Sector for Economic Policies and Regulatory Reform plans to consolidate the Fiscal Impact Assessment Form and the RIA Forms so that ministries will be required to work with one standardised format. It is not yet clear what will be the relation of such a consolidated standard form with the Memorandum in future. The Memorandum requires ministries to conduct impact assessment for all proposals going to the government session and encompasses a broad impact assessment framework, whereas the RIA will be focused only on proposed laws and mostly on economic impacts. The benefits of each of the approaches should be reviewed.

An important development in relation to regulatory impact assessment is evident. Serious efforts should be made to strengthen the capacity for impact assessment, both in the General Secretariat and in ministries. The General Secretariat should align and harmonise all impact assessment requirements in order to avoid any duplication and overburdening of ministries.

10. Better Regulation

Macedonia does not have an explicit policy on better regulation. However, a number of elements of a better regulation policy have been put in place. For example, by Decision in November 2006 the government introduced the regulatory reform generally known as the “regulatory guillotine”, with the key objective of minimising formalities and administrative obstacles for citizens and businesses generated by the existing legislation. The Decision also defined the procedure, institutional mechanisms and deadlines for implementation of the process.

This reform was implemented in three stages. The first stage was focused on identification of all valid primary and secondary legislation in the relevant policy areas and on an assessment of whether this legislation imposes administrative costs for citizens or businesses. A total of 2162 regulations were identified, including primary and secondary legislation. All legislation was reviewed by relevant working groups to assess the necessity for specific regulations according to pre-defined criteria. A list of existing regulations, prepared by the Sector for Economic Policies and Regulatory Reform, will soon be published in the Single Electronic Register of Regulations.

The second stage included an assessment of the recommendations of the working groups by the Regulatory Reforms Commission, mostly comprising state secretaries. Broad consultations were conducted with NGOs, the business community, other interested parties, and experts in the relevant policy sectors. About 900 proposals for simplifying or abolishing regulations came from interested groups and businesses.

In the third stage, the Co-ordinative Committee, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Economic Affairs, recommended 64 laws and 481 pieces of secondary legislation that needed to be simplified or abolished on the basis of previous assessments carried out in the process. By Decision the government abolished 341 pieces of secondary legislation that were obsolete or against the principles of a market economy. Amendments to the laws are underway.

The Sector for Economic Policies and Regulatory Reform continues to review proposals coming to the government. It is planned that the RIA process, once it becomes effective in January 2009 (see Section 9 above), will streamline the process applying the principles of better regulation.

Significant progress has been made in simplifying or abolishing existing regulations that had created unnecessary burdens for citizens and businesses. The principles of better regulation will be integrated in the RIA process.

11. Transparency, Consultation and Communication with the Public

The February 2008 amendments to the Rules of Procedure introduce the Single Electronic Register of Regulations, which offers a consolidated overview of primary and secondary legislation by policy sector, thus ensuring transparency. The General Secretariat is responsible for publishing and managing the Single Electronic Register through the government website. The General Secretariat is also responsible for publishing the decrees, decisions and other documents formally adopted by the government in the *Official Gazette*. The parliament’s secretariat is responsible for publishing the laws adopted by parliament in the *Official Gazette*.

Ministries are responsible for publishing all draft regulations on their websites and in the Single Electronic Register, thus giving an opportunity to all interested stakeholders to comment on the draft. In the case of amendments that change more than one-fifth of the provisions in the law, the ministry is responsible for

publishing the complete law, clearly showing the amended provisions. All interested stakeholders may submit their comments within 10 days from the date of publishing of the drafts. Ministries should prepare a report on the comments received and include a justification as to why comments were not accepted. The report should be published on their websites and in the Single Electronic Register. The proposed legislation and the reports on the comments received will remain public (i.e. posted on the relevant website and on the Single Electronic Register) for one year after the law becomes effective. Once the RIA is operational, ministries will also be required to publish the results of the initial regulatory impact assessment in the Single Electronic Register of Regulations.

In reality, very few ministries publish draft regulations on their websites. Involvement of NGOs and other relevant stakeholders in the policy or law-drafting process is not a standard procedure in most ministries. There is, however, an understanding in ministries and in the government that NGOs may be valuable partners in the policy process. A strategy to support co-operation with the NGO sector was adopted in January 2007, with the purpose of strengthening the participative policy process. A Unit for Co-operation with NGOs was established in the General Secretariat to support the implementation of the strategy and to serve as a link between the government and NGOs.

Regular information on weekly business and information on the positions of the government on specific issues are provided by the Government Spokesperson, who is supported by the Public Relations Sector in the General Secretariat. The Spokesperson co-operates with the Secretary General, state secretaries and the spokespersons in each of the ministries in order to provide co-ordinated information on all activities of the government.

The procedures and mechanisms for ensuring transparency are adequate and allow for effective participatory policy-making. The government should require ministries to comply with the rules and fully involve relevant stakeholders early in the policy and law-drafting process.

12. Summary and Next Steps

The key characteristics of the strategic planning and decision-making systems in Macedonia are the following:

- The procedures for inter-ministerial consultations are clear, but most consultations take place only after draft legislative proposals have been developed; substantive consultations in the policy development stage are rare.
- The work planning system is well established and operational, and it has the mechanisms to link the strategic priorities of the government to the annual legislative agenda; however, some inconsistencies remain between the main planning documents, including the Annual Work Programme, the NPAA and the budget, which indicate a fragmentation of planning procedures in ministries.
- The General Secretariat has developed procedures and capacities to provide solid logistical support to the decision-making system; substantive strategic and policy capacity is still weak.
- The framework for managing European affairs is well-designed and incorporated in the decision-making system; the top managerial position and most of the middle-management positions in the Secretariat for European Affairs should be filled as soon as possible to ensure sustainable capacity to manage ongoing co-ordination.
- There is a growing awareness of the importance of impact assessment in the policy process; RIA has been introduced as mandatory for proposed laws, but it is mostly seen as a mechanism to continue regulatory reform and initially will focus only on economic impacts.
- Policy development capacities in ministries are still weak.
- A Single Electronic Register of Regulations will soon be published on the website of the government, offering a clear overview of existing legislation; at this point, only some ministries publish draft laws on their websites.

Next Steps

Continued political support is necessary to further develop the policy-making and policy co-ordination systems in Macedonia. Further efforts to develop these systems should focus on:

- Improving strategic planning and policy development capacity in ministries, focusing specifically on analytical skills; the organisational structures responsible for overall co-ordination of strategic and policy issues that were established within ministries should be developed and staffed;
- Further development of capacities in the General Secretariat, especially the ability to provide substantive strategic and policy advice to government commissions and the government, and to proactively and creatively encourage ministries to improve the quality of their policy proposals;
- Avoiding any fragmentation of the General Secretariat that might lead to inefficiencies or duplication of responsibilities;
- Consolidation and harmonisation of the various requirements related to mandatory analyses and supporting documents submitted to the government in order to avoid duplication and overburdening of ministries;
- Appointment of key management staff in the Secretariat for European Affairs;
- Moving the deadlines in the integrated strategic planning and budget processes to dates earlier in the year so as to allow more time for planning in ministries and for negotiations with the Ministry of Finance.