

# Evaluation of IPA 2017 – EU Support for Education, Employment and Social Policy and IPA 2019 – Social Inclusion

## IPA 2017 - EU Support for Education, Employment and Social Policy and IPA 2019 - EU for Inclusion

EU support under IPA 2017–2019 addressed key national priorities across the education, employment, and social inclusion sectors. Interventions aimed to modernise education governance, strengthen employment services and labour-market policies, and expand access to community-based social protection services particularly for Roma communities, women and persons with disabilities.

This evaluation reviewed two major EU IPA interventions in North Macedonia, IPA 2017 (Education, Employment and Social Policy) and IPA 2019 (EU for Inclusion) aimed at improving employability, reducing poverty, and strengthening social inclusion for vulnerable groups such as youth, women, Roma communities and persons with disabilities. Together, the two programmes supported reforms in education, activation and labour-market services, community-based social services, deinstitutionalisation, and Roma housing.

Period of implementation of the evaluation: February 2025 – November 2025

Budget: EUR 118,700

# Evaluation of IPA 2017 – EU Support for Education, Employment and Social Policy and IPA 2019 – Social Inclusion

## Main findings

- EU support to North Macedonia's education sector has been highly effective. It improved access to education, promoted inclusion, and enhanced the quality of learning. The support was aligned with national priorities and EU standards and contributed to long-term reforms and sustainable improvements, particularly for vulnerable groups.
- EU support delivered more than short-term results. It helped improve employment outcomes, increased labour market participation, and supported important reforms in policies, governance, and service delivery.
- The impact of EU support went beyond improving services. It also strengthened institutions and governance. Ministries, municipalities, and providers improved service planning, monitoring, and delivery.

## Lessons learnt

- Systemic reform in vocational education and training (VET) requires deep employer engagement to ensure training reflects labour market needs as well as strong systems for validating skills and qualifications so that learning outcomes are recognised and transferable.
- Sustainable employment outcomes for vulnerable groups require integrated support services that address barriers to labour market participation. While job placement incentives can support employment entry, long-term job retention requires coordinated employment, social, health, and skills-development services.
- Deinstitutionalisation and Roma inclusion need stable funding, strong local government capacity, and well-coordinated services.

## Recommendations

- Scale up demand-driven VET by strengthening cooperation with employers and integrating successful approaches into national policies. Support continuous professional development for teachers, build on progress in digital education through a national framework, and ensure sustainable funding through state budgets and performance-based support.
- Strengthen and institutionalise social dialogue to support coherent, evidence-based employment and inclusion reforms.
- Implement the social services framework to strengthen community-based services and ensure their long-term sustainability.