



**ASSOCIATION FOR LEGAL EDUCATION AND
TRANSPARENCY LET STATION**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2025



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INTRODUCTION

Dear all,

The Strategic plan of the Association for Legal Education and Transparency LET Station for the period 2024-2025 was drawn up with the participation of the association's team, community promoters, the entire organizational structure, as well as all key stakeholders and users of our services, after previous consultations.

During its drafting, were taken into account the needs and key problems of the users of our services, as well as the legal framework for citizens' associations, world trends and the constant need to protect and promote the goals of the civil sector.

The key points on which our strategic plan and our work are based are:

- Legal empowerment and access to justice for marginalized communities
- Encouraging citizens to exercise their rights
- Legal education of citizens
- Advocacy to address the most pressing issues facing our target groups.

The Association LET Station will invest all its capacities to implement the planned activities and goals through continuous promotion and protection of the rights of all citizens equally, and especially of marginalized communities. For this purpose, we will strive to promote, advance and protect the rights of citizens, encourage them to exercise their rights, educate themselves and represent themselves before the relevant institutions at the local and national level.

We will continue to work actively to improve the legal services of the association and strongly advocate for better cooperation between the civil sector and the institutions and improvement of their transparency and accountability.

Vesna Shapkoski

Executive director

Association LET Station

ABOUT US

The association LET Station is a grass-roots organization focused on legal empowerment and access to justice for marginalized communities, especially the Roma and rural communities in North Macedonia. In our work we use a community-based approach to empower citizens in realizing their rights, particularly focusing on health and social rights, as well as housing, the environment, civic participation in democratic processes at the local level, transparency and accountability of institutions, etc.

As such, we provide legal and paralegal assistance and legal education, facilitate activities, community mobilization and advocacy to address the most pressing issues that are facing our target groups. Our team consists of lawyers, paralegals and community health promoters who work together and mutually advance their knowledge and practice. As a grass-root organization, we carry out our activities not only in the office of the organization located in the city of Prilep, but also through a mobile office that travels through three rural areas (Mariovo, Krivogashtani and Dolneni) as well as through online/telephone communication. In this way, we annually provide around 1200 services and engage more than 100 representatives from communities, various groups and institutions in field activities. Currently, the Association employs a total of 10 people with an employment contract/part-time employees and 22 volunteers, who are actively working to achieve the goals of the Association.

We are also dedicated to facilitating and mediating communication and cooperation between citizens and institutions at the local level, as well as increasing citizen participation in decision-making processes. The Association was founded in 2018 and since then has been continuously implementing projects related to strengthening the community and advocating for change.

The very term "station" is a place where people can always turn, and the word "LET" is an acronym and stands for legal education and transparency. This means that this Association is a place where all citizens can be legally educated and ask for help, as well as transparency and accountability from the institutions.

The basic goals towards which our work and action are directed are:

- ✓ To provide education and assistance to citizens in the direction of exercising their rights, with a focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially the Roma, in the area of health and social rights.
- ✓ To encourage the institutions of the system of transparency and responsibility in the work, adapted to the needs of the citizens.
- ✓ To promote equality of citizens on all grounds, by undertaking activities for prevention and protection against discrimination.
- ✓ To encourage natural and legal persons for their involvement in actions of a humanitarian nature, in order to reduce poverty.
- ✓ To provide conditions for multi-ethnic and social cohesion and action through the inclusion of people from different ethnic, geographic and social profiles as an opportunity to achieve a real and effective contribution to positive social changes.
- ✓ To contribute in achieving gender equality and dealing with existing inequalities between men and women, in the direction of promoting women's involvement in social processes.

VISION: Enabled access to justice for every citizen.

MISSION: To fulfill the legal needs of the citizens by encouraging the openness and cooperation of the institutions.

KEY STRATEGIC GOALS OF LET STATION 2024-2025

General objective: To provide education and assistance to citizens in the direction of realizing their rights, with a focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially the Roma, in the area of health and social rights.

The education of citizens in the direction of exercising their rights is made possible on a daily basis through the continuous implementation of activities in the community, where they learn about the rights and obligations arising from them, get involved in various activities, and pay particular attention to the exercise of the rights of marginalized groups of citizens whose access to institutions is difficult due to various economic, geographical and social factors. Precisely because of this, Association LET Station will continue the work of the legal assistance that is provided in the main office, but also in the mobile offices in Mariovo, municipality of Krivogastani and municipality of Dolneni. Also, we will continue to work in improving the work of health promoters in the community, whose main goal is education, care and assistance in realizing the rights to health care for marginalized groups of citizens.

Key objectives:

1. To encourage the institutions of the system of transparency and responsibility in the work, adapted to the needs of the citizens.

This key goal will be achieved through the implementation of specific activities and projects in the field of transparency and accountability of the institutions both at the local and national level, aimed at reducing corruption, raising the level of openness of the institutions towards the citizens and towards the realization of their rights, but also through the involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation of processes to ensure an inclusive and equal society for all.

2. To promote equality of citizens on all grounds, by undertaking activities for prevention and protection against discrimination.

Equality of citizens has been one of the main principles and priorities for the Association since its foundation, with priority being given to equality as the main principle in exercising any citizen's right. The promotion of equality is achieved on a daily basis, especially in the reception of the parties who come for different legal assistance and support in the Association, and also through the implementation of all activities and actions foreseen by the current projects of the association. In the next two years, LET Station will continue to work on active application of the principle of equality, promotion of the rights of citizens, and especially of marginalized groups and communities.

3. To encourage natural and legal persons for their involvement in actions of a humanitarian nature, with the aim of reducing poverty.

The humanitarian character of the Association is seen in the daily provision of free legal aid and services to all citizens who need to solve the legal obstacles and problems they face. At the same time, the goal of the association is to encourage all other actors in the community, both physical and legal persons, to actively engage in humanitarian activities of a different nature, in order to influence the reduction and eradication of poverty. This will be achieved through communication with the parties, joint implementation of projects and activities in this field, provision of education, training, employment, protection of citizens' rights, etc., with the aim of improving the general quality of life of all citizens, but especially of marginalized groups and communities and poverty reduction.

4. To provide conditions for multi-ethnic and social cohesion and action through the inclusion of people from different ethnic, geographic and social profiles as an opportunity to achieve a real and effective contribution to positive social changes.

In the next two years, the Association will continue to work on ensuring and improving the conditions for multi-ethnic and social cohesion, both at the local and regional level, with the active involvement of all actors from the community in this type of activities. In the past period, we worked especially on building the relations between the key stakeholders (citizens, civil society sector, institutions, religious groups and leaders, etc.), so in due time it is expected that they will be equally involved in the direction of the advancement and promotion of multiculturalism and social cohesion, implementing joint activities, improving the quality of life of communities and jointly solving key problems and deficiencies in access to justice for all equally.

5. To contribute in achieving gender equality and dealing with existing inequalities between men and women, in the direction of promoting women's involvement in social processes.

The Association LET Station prioritizes gender issues, identity and achieving gender equality in all its plans, activities and projects. Considering that in the past years, the need for promoting women's involvement in social processes, their active action in creating local policies and strengthening their participation in social life has come to the fore it is necessary expedient and long-term planning of activities and projects in this field. Therefore, in the next two years, LET Station will actively participate in the proposal and implementation of measures and activities to promote the role of women in society, especially women from marginalized groups and communities (from the Roma community, other ethnic communities, as well as women who live in rural areas), equally with men. In particular, from the previous experience has been highlighted as a priority for work - the active inclusion of women from smaller ethnic communities and women living in rural areas, who face a variety of problems related to health care, education, underage marriages, employment and employment rights etc., whereby the Association undertakes to actively work on improving the status of women in society in the next period. As particularly priority activities in the next period, we single out the work on

child marriages (prevention and improvement of relations in the family) through different types of education and gender-based violence, which is a particularly current topic in the past period, and the association aims to become a licensed provider of social services for victims of family and gender-based violence, given the association's previous experience working in this field.

PROGRAMS

➤ **ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

- ✓ Legal education, legal assistance and legal strengthening of citizens to exercise their rights (social and child protection, health care, personal documentation and civil status, housing, environment, employment, etc.)
- ✓ Socio-economic strengthening of young people from rural areas
- ✓ Activities within the service for strengthened reintegration and resocialization
- ✓ Monitoring cases of hate speech on a different basis and strengthening the national protective mechanisms against hate speech in the Republic of North Macedonia
- ✓ Strengthening civil resistance against fake news and disinformation.
- ✓ Active work on strengthening Roma returnees through equal access to economic and social rights (enabling access to education and employment)
- ✓ Activities to help and deal with family and other forms of work-based violence
- ✓ Legal empowerment of citizens, reporting and institutional action in cases of child marriage
- ✓ Improvement of the work of the Mobile Offices of LET Station in the three municipalities (Krivogashtani, Dolneni and Mariovo)

➤ **ANTI-CORRUPTION**

- ✓ Increasing community engagement and civic resilience in the field of improving transparency and accountability of institutions and reducing the harmful effects of corruption.
- ✓ Monitoring of public procurement especially at the local level and participation in the development of mechanisms for strengthened institutional accountability.

➤ **ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING**

- ✓ Strengthening human and organizational capacities in the areas of research, community work, strategic planning, transparency and accountability in work.
- ✓ Advancement of the work of the social enterprise LET Club and increased promotion

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE LET CLUB

In order to advance the achievement of the mission of enabling access to justice for marginalized communities, the team of the Association for Legal Education and Transparency LET Station from Prilep immediately after its establishment in 2018, began to explore the idea of creating a social enterprise. Initially, this idea was considered and developed as a way to employ and empower the members of the community-users of the association's services.

As the team learned and learned more about the concept of social entrepreneurship, they recognized the potential for generating flexible income to support the association. In the process of sketching new ideas, prototyping and iterating, several different concepts were tested before was identified an idea that is ready for implementation.

In 2019, analyzing the most common problems and challenges faced by marginalized and vulnerable communities, it began to develop ideas for a social enterprise that would increase social inclusion. Thus, part of the team of LET Station joined a group of organizations working on legal empowerment in an accelerator program for social entrepreneurship led by Acumen Academy (+Acumen Academy), where this idea and plans to test it began to develop. As part of this program, was carried out a market research, was compiled a financial plan and was defined the concept with customers, segments and activities, while all this indicated that LET Station identified a strong, unmet market need and sustainable distribution channels. At the end of 2019, the team joined a group of organizations for legal empowerment that develop social enterprises, with the support of the Foundation Open Society Macedonia, and under the mentorship of CEED Macedonia, during which was created a new idea for establishing a social enterprise - renting the space of the association for holding events and individual work. As the association owns a spacious office space located in the downtown area – already an important enabler of legal empowerment work – it can also be a source of earned income. Until then, Prilep had only one space available for organizing events (which is located in a hotel, with prices that are often too high for local civic organizations, private or public enterprises), so LET Station started to develop the idea of renting parts of its office for organizing events for up to 30 people, at reasonable and flexible prices. After receiving positive feedback from the task force, the team conducted market research with potential customers, developed a financial plan, and began prototyping space configurations and pricing structures.

Important in this section was the advantage that the basic organizational budget already covered fixed costs (such as electricity and rent) so that there was an opportunity to sustainably offset the costs of new equipment and space within a reasonable time frame of operation. With the help of their mentors, the team created a sales strategy and pricing model that gives customers the choice of renting the space alone as well as in a package with coffee break, catering and refreshment services.

As preparations began to pilot the idea in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, making it impossible to hold live events. Thus, by the end of 2020, were being considered other social enterprise ideas that would rely on less live contact.

Thus, in January 2021, with the support of the Foundation Open Society Macedonia, was done the necessary partitioning of the space and furnishing, and already in April of the same year, started operating the LET Club, a social enterprise that offers space rental and services for organizing events, as well as space for individual work. For a period of 9 months from the start of work, although with restrictions and limitations due to the pandemic, 15 one-day events were organized in LET Club, and from October 2021, it received its first clients for individual work. The income generated from its operation is used to strengthen and improve the legal and paralegal assistance that the Association LET Station provides it for citizens from marginalized communities, as well as for maintaining the Personal Documentation Fund, through which the association financially helps the most vulnerable categories of citizens to obtain personal documents to exercise their rights.

LET Club is a pioneer in developing a model of self-sustainability of services for legal strengthening of communities in this region and as such in the future it is expected to produce growth and development not only of its activity but also of the services it will maintain.

In the next period, the social enterprise will focus on active and long-term fundraising for the advancement of the work, promotion, increase of customers and improvement of the conditions of the space that is rented, by securing additional funds from donors and generating personal income in order to improve the legal assistance that the association provides for marginalized groups of citizens.

PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The main office and members of the Association will evaluate the progress in achieving the expected results on an annual basis through the use of various tools: total produced case files, reports of implemented projects and activities, announcements on the website and social networks of the association, evaluation questionnaires of specific goals and activities, etc. The annual narrative reports will show the activities of the current projects, as well as the achieved results, in accordance with the indicators set in the project applications.

FINANCIAL PLAN 2024 - 2025

In the next period, the Association expects an increase in income based on donors and realization of projects, as well as from the economic activity of the social enterprise LET Club, which generates income from the organization of events and the rental of space for individual work.

ANALYSIS OF RISKS, MEASURES AND ACTIVITIES

The biggest risks that the Association faces arise from economic, social and geographical factors. The risks especially refer to the lack of funds for financing activities and realizing the goals of the association, which are not always similar or the same as the goals of the donors. Therefore, the association actively works to advance the goals and follow new trends, and precisely because of this, the staff is currently being trained on various topics such as environmental protection, gender aspects, artificial intelligence and digital technologies, etc.

Another challenge that the association faces is the geographical location in relation to the capital, which in many cases can be an advantage considering our accessibility to the communities we work with, but still in part represents an exclusion from the national level institutions that fully they direct their work only in the capital and are mostly aimed at supporting the civil sector in the Skopje and Pologne regions.

The other risks refer to the target groups, who often face the impossibility of exercising various rights due to the geographical distance from the municipalities in which they live, the unavailability of the Internet and other technical means of communication, as well as the impossibility of leaving their daily work responsibilities in the village where they live to come to the city and be educated and exercise their rights. The association actively works to reduce the harmful effects of these risks, especially through the operation of the Mobile Offices in the municipalities of Krivogastani, Dolneni and Mariovo, which bring them closer to the citizens for the realization of their rights, as well as the engaged promoters in the community who bring the rights of the citizens closer to them. At the same time, the association has an actively developed telephone line that works 24/7 in order to provide legal assistance to citizens at any time.

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