

**WORK PROGRAM OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
NORTH MACEDONIA**

(2024 – 2028)

Incoming Prime Minister

Prof. Hristijan Mickoski, PhD

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INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the strongly expressed will of Macedonian citizens in the 2024 Parliamentary Elections, a key strategic goal of the future Government is for Macedonia to become a full-fledged member of the European Union.

In the face of historic challenges and widespread disappointment, the citizens of Macedonia unequivocally expressed their great desire for change and entrusted us with the mandate to guide our nation towards a brighter future.

This Government Work Program, covering the period from 2024 to 2028, is a comprehensive roadmap designed to address the most pressing issues and deliver tangible improvements in the lives of our citizens.

We are creating a Government that is committed to returning Macedonia to its rightful place as a prosperous, just, and dynamic democracy.

Our main goal is to restore trust in state government institutions, eliminate corruption and ensure the rule of law.

We are starting to realize our vision for Macedonia, which is again in the hands of its people, where every citizen can thrive and live a dignified life.

Central to our life's mission is the economic revival of our country. We will embark on a new cycle of strong economic growth, fuelled by stable public finances, support for a competitive private sector and significant investment in innovation and information technology. Our goal is to create productive and well-paid jobs, reduce unemployment and foster an environment where businesses can flourish. Through strategic investments in infrastructure and energy, we will improve the quality of life of all Macedonian citizens and ensure sustainable development.

Education and health are at the heart of our agenda. We will implement reforms to improve the quality and availability of education, preparing citizens for the challenges of the modern world. Our health system will be strengthened to provide safe and high-quality care for every citizen. We will also focus on social cohesion, family support, promotion of equal opportunities and protection of the rights and freedoms of all individuals.

Our commitment to European integration remains firm. We will work diligently to align our policies with European standards, while promoting our goal of full-fledged membership in the European Union. This approach will bring stability, economic growth and strengthened international cooperation, while ensuring a better future for Macedonia.

Culture and tourism are vital to our national identity and economic prosperity. We will invest in the development of cultural infrastructure, support the arts, and promote Macedonia's rich heritage both domestically and internationally. By improving our tourism

offerings and the visitor experience, we will attract more tourists, strengthen local economies, and showcase the beauty and diversity of our country.

The development of sports is key to fostering national pride and promoting a healthy lifestyle. Our Government will invest in sports facilities, support athletes, and encourage participation in physical activities of all age groups. Sport will be a key element in building community spirit and providing opportunities for our young people.

Young people are the future of Macedonia, and we are committed to creating an environment where they can thrive. We will create opportunities for education, employment, and entrepreneurship, while ensuring that young people have the skills and support they need to succeed in this rapidly changing globalized world. By involving young people and incorporating their perspectives into policymaking, we will build a more inclusive and dynamic society.

Caring for our retirees is a priority. We will ensure that those who have contributed to our society during their lifetime receive the support and dignity they deserve in their later years. This includes increasing their pensions, improving health services, and providing social programs that improve the quality of life for our senior citizens.

Building good relations with our neighbours is essential for regional stability and prosperity. We are committed to fostering positive and constructive relations with all neighbouring countries, based on mutual respect and cooperation. Through diplomatic efforts and regional initiatives, we will work to resolve misunderstandings, improve trade, and promote cultural exchange.

The development of inter-ethnic relations is a fundamental part of our vision for Macedonia, which is again in the hands of its people. We will promote policies that encourage understanding, respect, and cooperation among all ethnic groups. By celebrating our diversity and ensuring equal opportunities for all, we will build a stronger and more cohesive society.

Transparency and accountability will be paramount in every aspect of our governance. We will ensure that public funds are used efficiently and that all citizens feel the benefits of our policies. By embracing digital transformation and innovative approaches, we will modernize public services and make them more accessible.

Dear citizens of Macedonia,

This Work Program is not just a plan, but a personal promise and a given word. It reflects the strategic vision of the new political government and the collective aspirations of our proud nation.

Our commitment is to transform Macedonia into a nation where the voice of every citizen will be heard, and their potential will be realized.

Together we will take back the country from those who betrayed the people's trust.

We will move forward with pride and determination, rebuilding a Macedonia that is yours again – a Macedonia where transparency and accountability are not just ideals, but reality.

The power of change is in your hands.

With your support we will make Macedonia a place of prosperity, justice, and hope for everyone. Let us return this country to its people. Macedonia for you, for each one of you.

Sincerely,

Prof. Hristijan Mickoski, PhD

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I QUALITY LIVING STANDARDS – A NEW ECONOMIC GROWTH CYCLE

○ STABLE PUBLIC FINANCES

The Government's priority goal in the 2024 - 2028 period will be to create prerequisites for a new cycle of economic growth. It will be based on encouraging the economic freedom of investors by creating fair conditions for all business entities. The realization of a high amount of public capital investments, stronger and financially supported investment activity of domestic manufacturing companies, the entry of foreign companies and the external environment stabilization shall be the main economic growth drivers. Unless unforeseen political or economic disruptions occur at the global and regional levels, there are conditions starting as from 2025 for GDP growth to range from 3.0% to 5.0%.

Fiscal policy in the 2024 - 2028 period will be aimed at restoring macroeconomic stability and supporting economic activity through gradual fiscal consolidation, improving the management of public finances, and maintaining a prominent level of capital expenditures. Active and responsible fiscal policy will serve the purpose of bringing economic growth while having a moderate and sustainable level of deficit and debt. Aware of the heavy fiscal burden and impaired fiscal sustainability left by the previous Government (where the public debt at the end of 2023 reached a record 62.1% of GDP, and huge interest-based payments of 1.8 billion euros are accruing in the coming five years), in the next period, the Government will take fiscal consolidation measures in order to return the country to the moderate indebtedness level path.

A gradual budget deficit reduction to a level below 3.0% of GDP is planned. It will be linked to higher capital investments in infrastructure projects, primarily for the construction of transport and utility infrastructure, then, investments in energy facilities and investments in educational and health infrastructure.

In the absence of any additional external shocks, the Government is expecting that in the 2025 - 2028 period, the average inflation rate would be 2.0% - 2.5% annually. The Government will respect the Central Bank's independence; while expecting that through timely measures and activities it will maintain low inflation, exchange rate stability, and ensure an efficient financial sector.

The expected acceleration of the economic growth, employment, and wages, as well as the more stable external and internal environment, will contribute to the acceleration of the deposit base growth and companies' credit support.

The Government's goal is to reduce the unemployment rate to 7.5% by 2028. This means that in the next four years, about 55 thousand new jobs shall be created in the Republic of Macedonia. Unemployment shall be reduced by: achieving high economic growth; maintaining the business climate at a level among the best in the world, which will provide direct support to domestic companies for new investments and creation of new jobs; attracting new foreign direct investments; active policies and measures through the Employment Service Agency; increased and targeted support for higher yields in agriculture; further support of construction and related activities through a higher amount of capital investments; modernization of education to create a more competitive workforce.

The Government's primary goal and priority in the 2024 - 2028 period is to increase the living standards of Macedonia's citizens. To achieve this goal, it is required to strengthen revenue collection, improve public spending efficiency, reduce public procurement corruption to zero, implement significant infrastructure projects and take care of future generations through ensuring public debt sustainability. In order to achieve an important level of major infrastructure project implementation, such projects shall be strategically planned and budgeted.

In the coming period, one of the main activities of the Government will be aimed at reducing the grey economy and increasing the collection of funds for the state budget. Increasing the tax base by integrating the grey into the official economy will allow for more revenue to be collected in the budget. This will enable to keep low tax rates for other taxes, while also having a larger amount of funds for capital investments, tax exemptions, subsidies and incentives for the domestic private sector operation and citizens.

The allocation of budget funds is equally important. As to the inefficient public spending, the high corruption level in public procurement and the low realization of capital expenditures for infrastructure projects in the previous period, the Government shall be committed to eradicating public procurement corruption and significantly improving the public spending efficiency and expediency, while putting its main focus on capital expenditure realization.

The quality of public services must be improved. For this purpose, the Government will perform full digitization of public sector services. The Government undertakes to take activities aimed at reviewing and streamlining the setup of state administration bodies, with the possibility of merging or abolishing certain state bodies.

In order to improve the living standards of educational, health, cultural and social workers, as well as employees of the judiciary, the police and the military, and all public administration employees, it is planned to increase their salaries as the economy is growing. The Government shall take exceptional care of single parents, multi-child families, people

with disabilities and the sick. Social assistance will continue to increase. For pensioners, we will provide additional 5,000 denars for each pension within the first year of our mandate. Thus, we will contribute to an improved and better-quality life for the most senior citizens.

The Government is committed to creating a predictable tax and regulatory environment as one of the most important prerequisites for doing business. The process of regulatory changes in any area that is important to the operation of both the business and citizens will be inclusive. We will establish a public-private dialogue platform.

The Government will ensure that Macedonia is among the countries with the lowest taxes for both companies and citizens. This shall be achieved through: flat tax retention; the 10% personal income tax shall not be increased; for newly employed young people who are up to 29 years old, personal income tax exemption is envisaged; tax reliefs within the personal income tax for freelancers; raising the threshold for VAT registration from two to three million denars regarding any consolidated trade of proprietary bonds; a full personal income tax refund shall be provided for every employed woman with a newborn; the profit tax shall remain at the rate of 10%; the reinvested profit shall still not be subject to taxation; to attract multinational companies with high net profits of above 50 million euros, the effective rate of profit tax shall be 5%. We also envisage the return of tax benefits to companies (recognized expenditure) regarding any premiums paid for voluntary life insurance for the purpose of retaining and motivating employees. Customs duties will be gradually harmonized with the EU customs rates. The customs Tariff shall be revised and adapted to the export-import needs of both the economy and the state.

Capital investments are the key factor to improving the economy competitiveness and citizens' quality of life. In the following period, the Government commits to: make capital investments solely for productive projects, i.e., infrastructure and energy projects that will serve the purpose of the business sector, including communal and other local infrastructure capital projects to improve the general living conditions of Macedonian citizens; an increased amount of capital investments of at least 3 billion euros with a significantly improved structure; annual amount of up to 250 million euros of capital transfers to municipalities, meaning a total of 1 billion euros during our mandate; strategic planning of major infrastructure projects, including budgeting thereof.

During its mandate period, the Government shall also focus on reviewing the system of transfer distribution from the central budget to municipalities. Transfers from the central budget shall be correlated with the efficiency of municipalities' own source revenue collection. Linking the budget transfers to the success of municipalities to collect their own source revenues will mean both fair taxation and transfer of budget funds to municipalities.

The Government's vision is to create a better environment for taxpayers and tax officials, based on fairness, cooperation, transparency and strengthened trust. By digital transformation, innovative approaches and application of modern technologies, the PRO will mobilize tax revenues, which are a key source of public finances.

We will also introduce a mechanism for independent and objective verification of tax regulation application in specific tax controls and other tax procedures. Thus, we will ensure a fair and just approach and certainty for taxpayers, prevent bias in tax inspectors' decision-making and reduce the number of disputes resolved in court proceedings. We will introduce greater flexibility for payment of tax arrears, particularly for low-income taxpayers. Furthermore, we will redesign the VAT refund procedure and grant a "green card" status for a simplified VAT refund procedure. In this way, the VAT refund procedure will be quick and efficient for any taxpayers that meet the tax trust criteria. By this measure, we will prevent tax fraud and ensure certainty and objectivity for taxpayers.

Activities are also foreseen with regard to: creating a new PRO integrated electronic system compatible with other state institutions' electronic systems; introducing contactless tools and innovative approaches to contact taxpayers; electronic issuance of certificates and receipts, including other tax documents; organized information to and communication with target groups of taxpayers about their tax rights and obligations; cooperative arrangements with large taxpayers; a taxpayers' rating list, including a publication thereof; introducing regulations and procedures for issuance of tax inspector licenses. The introduction of an electronic invoice (E-invoice) is also envisaged, which shall speed up the operations between private and public sector entities through the PRO electronic system.

In terms of customs modernization, the priority shall be given to the Customs Administration's digitization, new e-services introduction, and the electronic submission and issuance of documents that are currently physically submitted and issued at the Customs Administration counters. We will work on the Customs Laboratory accreditation following the example of the most modern European countries.

○ **SUPPORT FOR COMPETITIVE PRIVATE SECTOR**

The improvement of the conditions for conducting a competitive business and reforms related to the reduction of administrative burdens shall be the focus of the Government's policies related to the creation of a conducive economic climate for companies.

The Government shall commit to a development concept based on modern industrialization and companies' improved export performance by increasing the number of

export products with higher added value levels, the number of export companies and the number of export markets.

For this purpose, domestic manufacturing facilities shall be systematically supported in their efforts for production, technical and technological, staff and organizational restructuring with the aim of building greater competitiveness to win global markets and get greater opportunities for their integration within the national, regional, and global supply chains.

At the same time, the model of attracting foreign investments shall be improved, in order to ensure objectivity in the criteria for selection of credible companies, investment success, greater added value, greater domestic economy effects and creation of high-paying jobs.

Legislation reforms shall be prepared and implemented in collaboration with the private sector, and their goal shall be to reduce legal barriers, unnecessary laws, by-laws, rules, and procedures that aggravate the business and increase costs. In addition, we envisage the abolition of a large number of parafiscal duties burdening the companies.

Therefore, the Government's Program goals to support the competitive private sector shall include: overall economy's higher economic growth rates; better standard of living for Macedonian citizens; higher level of worker productivity and technological development; creation of new high-paying jobs, including better workers' standard; return of the economy as a topic in the focus of the whole society; increase in domestic and foreign investments and increase in exports.

Creating conditions for higher competitiveness of the domestic private sector shall be the Government's focus. Our mission is to encourage domestic private investment growth by: taxing companies with low tax rates; providing a predictable tax environment; ensuring favourable financial resources for investments in manufacturing facilities; reducing parafiscal duty costs; ensuring a higher quality of public services with an emphasis on digitization; a regulatory guillotine to cut red tape; retaining workers in the country and improving the quality of their knowledge and skills; fighting grey economy and improving the transport and energy infrastructure.

In the coming period, the Government will continue its financial support for investments of both domestic and foreign companies, which is regulated by the Law on Financial Support of Investments. We are planning to revise the procedure and requirements for obtaining such support in the direction of a greater amount of support for domestic exporting companies and companies from competitive advantage sectors.

A single Register of Granted State Aid shall also be introduced in order to prevent any abuse of financial support instruments and double use thereof.

In order to encourage a sustainable export growth, the Government shall, in addition to improving the transport and energy infrastructure, undertake trade policy reforms by: streamlining and digitizing border procedures and strengthening interagency coordination to reduce customs clearance delays and unnecessary commercial costs with the main trade partners; creating export promotion programs by supporting export-oriented companies in their process of building international brands, supporting marketing activities and participation in international fairs, organizing buying and selling missions and other promotional events for export-oriented companies; concluding new free trade agreements in order to increase the level of free trade and cover a larger number of products that would be exported.

The Government will help export-oriented companies to get in one place the information on any documents required to place their products in certain markets.

The Government's focus also includes micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which are the most numerous in the domestic economy. In order to increase access to finance for MSMEs, the Government shall ensure: the Development Bank's additional staffing with professional staff that will facilitate MSMEs' access to credit lines by improving business planning and reporting, for which programs shall be created in cooperation with consultancies; the number of banks participating in credit lines by EBRD, EIB and other international financial institutions shall increase by introducing an incentivized (lower) interest rate for such banks depending on the amount of their invested assets; and together with the Chambers of Commerce and the Development Bank, we will organize regular forums for MSMEs' middle management, in order to improve the quality of project documentation development and awareness of any existing financing opportunities.

The Government undertakes to implement a number of activities to reform the current system for attracting foreign direct investments through the following:

- Development of a revised 2025–2035 Strategy for attracting foreign direct investments, as a platform for long-term activity regarding any new greenfield and brownfield investments, mapping of industries with a focus on high-tech activities, institutional changes, and redesign of the financial support system.
- We will establish a single Agency for Foreign Investments and Export by merging and streamlining the existing agencies. This Agency shall provide services to investors under the one-stop shop system, both in terms of information and advice, as well as post-investment, such as aftercare.
- Any financial support shall be based on objective criteria.

- We will provide full infrastructural and logistical support in the industrial zones.
- We will renew the branding of Macedonia as a favourable investment destination and ensure its global promotion.
- Foreign investors and all relevant chambers shall be consulted when adopting any new legislation.
- Objective criteria and predictable procedures for issuing residence and work permits to top management, highly educated professional staff, international organizations' experts, and Macedonian diaspora members.

The Government's special task shall be to ensure easier inclusion of domestic companies in the supply chain of foreign companies that have invested in Macedonia. These activities will contribute to technology and know-how transfer through domestic business cooperation with multinational companies, as well as increase employment.

Gray economy seriously impairs the competitiveness of companies that pay taxes, contributions and other public dues used to finance all budget requirements in a regular and disciplined manner. Reducing grey economy will create a level playing field for companies and greater competitiveness thereof. Therefore, in the coming period, the Government undertakes to:

- Digitize and simplify the registration of micro and small companies, as well as the registration of workers hired on a shorter term and seasonally, especially in the activities of retail trade, construction, and other service activities.
- Raise public awareness about the advantages of businesses' formalization and registration of workers for their better social protection and equality of all under the law.
- Protect e-commerce from unregistered traders by amending the legislation and ensure tax payment.

We will implement a regulatory guillotine on any extensive regulations that affect both citizens and companies. It shall include scanning laws and by-laws, procedures, and actions, with proposals to either abolish or simplify those that are unnecessary or excessive. For the monitoring and control of parafiscal charges, we will create a digital register where all parafiscal charges levied at the central and local levels shall be registered. Within the Official Gazette, an e-Register of laws and by-laws by area shall be created. These tools will have a direct impact on improving the business climate, reducing red tape and corruption. Through an inclusive process, we expect great and active support from the business community, institutions, chambers of commerce and citizens for the successful detection of any challenging regulations and better realization of this project.

By integrating information on all licenses and permits availed of by both legal and natural persons in Macedonia, legal system reliability will be encouraged. Institutions shall, in different procedures, download the information from this register ex officio, instead of requesting it from the parties in the procedure. This benefit will also mean greater citizens' awareness and greater business cooperation.

The Trade Register shall be fully connected with the Central Population Register. Any change to natural persons' personal data shall automatically mean a change to such data in the Trade Register. Thus, red tape will be reduced, including any reporting obligations, time, and costs for companies.

In order to protect competition, we will increase the administrative capacity, staffing and budget support of the Commission for the Protection of Competition with the aim of enhancing its independence and operability.

The entrepreneurial spirit of youth and experienced people who have new ideas for starting a business must be supported, because it creates the potential for economic growth.

The Government is committed to dedicated support for startups in Macedonia through:

- Legislation amendments for the purpose of encouraging and supporting entrepreneurial initiatives.
- Promotion, revision, and adoption of legal regulations regarding venture capital and crowdfunding in order to increase competition and access to funding for startup companies.
- Government premises that are not in use shall be converted into business premises that startup companies will be able to use for a minimum fee.

Tax benefits shall be provided to support scientific research, applied (industrial) research and experimental research. As part of its support, the Government will provide benefits to cover operating and capital costs.

○ **SUPPORT FOR INNOVATIONS AND ICT SECTOR**

Creating a modern digital economy will be one of the Government's top priorities. Long-term, planned, and systemic work – instead of ad hoc work – in cooperation with the professional scientific community and civil society, particularly with chambers, shall be done on the creation and adoption of modern policies and strategies for the development of digital economy, the ICT sector, artificial intelligence, innovation, and the startup ecosystem.

Technological innovations and the application of disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud, big data, IoT, blockchain, metaverse, VR/AR, RPA, sensors, robots, drones, smart cities, 5G, platform economy, are key to Macedonian economy further transformation – from a labour-intensive to a knowledge-based economy.

Given that the main source of skilled labour is formal ICT education, it is necessary to work on improving the quality and quantity of “technology talent.” Therefore, we are planning:

- Changes in the primary and secondary education curricula related to the new digital world.
- A training module for high school and college students to acquire intermediate level digital skills.
- Enlargement of ICT colleges’ quotas, modernization of programs, introduction of master’s programs in the field of disruptive technologies, support for the procurement of infrastructure and the development of competencies.
- Voucher support system for graduates to attend certified IT training at an advanced level.
- Private sector support for advanced ICT workforce training.
- Retraining programs’ scope expansion to transform the workforce into ICT workforce.
- Advanced ICT training for unemployed persons – in cooperation with private providers and state universities, through voucher support.
- Training on cyber security: In cooperation with academia, training on cyber security shall be conducted, the aim of which is to raise awareness among children and young people, their parents, and teachers of the potential privacy violation threats on the Internet.

The Government shall prepare a development project and a study on a multifunctional technological and innovation park for the purpose of attracting high-tech companies and introducing and developing modern technologies.

As a Government, we will provide additional support to the internationalization of domestic ICT companies, as well as support to export-oriented software companies. We will invest in greater competitiveness of Macedonian products and services on global markets, through additional regulatory and tax incentives, subsidizing training, and education in the area of disruptive technologies.

Through additional funding for applied science and research and development (R&D), we will enable support for the opening of institutes in the field of disruptive technologies, the creation of modern instruments and the introduction of strict rules to finance only

innovative and high-tech companies. We will support the opening of technology parks and incubation and acceleration programs, while providing additional tax incentives to attract investors and VC funds. Thus, a conducive environment will be created for Macedonian innovation development and intellectual property creation.

The Government will give strong institutional and legal support to initiatives for greater and easier implementation of modern technologies in the financial sphere – FinTech. The future Government will work to enable the full functionality of platforms for the electronic fund transfer online, which shall include sending and receiving funds. Active efforts will be made to enable global payment processors to be available in Macedonia.

The Government will provide for legal possibilities to recognize the freelancers' group as persons working remotely on projects through digital platforms, following the example of European countries that are leaders in this area. A tax package will be made available to these persons with tax exemptions depending on the amount of their monthly income.

We envisage the introduction of a renewable residence visa for digital nomads, i.e., foreigners who would like to spend between 3 and 12 months living in Macedonia, provided they have secured remote work with a foreign employer and regular monthly income.

GovTech programs shall be supported regarding the cooperation of public institutions with startups and innovative companies to solve citizens' problems at the central and local levels, including the overall ecosystem development, such as: online content and mobile applications, hackathons, support for participation in international competitions, Olympiads and specialized training of talented pupils and university students, digital content for children or young people, applications that use open data.

After the comprehensive review of the Innovation Fund's previous operation, a significant focus in the area of innovation will be placed on programs to support the ICT sector, domestic companies' technological development and innovation.

In terms of supporting the business sector digital transformation, robust institutional and financial support is foreseen for: a Digital Innovation Centre that will be established in cooperation with higher education institutions and the private sector, which will provide support to companies promoting digital transformation benefits in one place; digital transformation strategy creation; providing solutions and technological integration thereof; use of green technologies and ecofriendly practices; development of skills among employees for the application of new technologies (artificial intelligence, cloud, big data, IoT, blockchain, metaverse, VR/AR, RPA, sensors, robots, drones, smart cities, 5G, platform economy), work with data, business analysis and forecasting, agile methodologies, e-commerce; and promoting open innovation or cooperation with startups, innovative companies and institutes.

○ PRODUCTIVE AND HIGH-PAYING JOBS

The Government will work to increase the workforce quality through formal education, continuous training, retraining and upskilling programs, with the aim of increasing employability, productivity and opening new high-paying jobs. In an inclusive process with the business sector representatives, secondary schools, and colleges, including all relevant state institutions and civil society, we will perform a comprehensive labour market analysis with the aim of detecting any systemic weaknesses and shortcomings, as well as opportunities for the modernization thereof.

Our goal is to have 55,000 new jobs created by the end of 2028.

Through the Employment Service Agency's programs aimed at youth employment measures, skills and qualifications creation, vulnerable groups' retraining and upskilling, training for labour market-demanded skills, entrepreneurship support, as well as co-financing of training for the use of modern technologies, we will provide a budget of 150 million euros.

The Employment Service Agency will grow into an effective intermediary between employers and workers. Its activities shall also include employment mediation, implementation of packages of measures and services aimed at the long-term unemployed, women, youth, unskilled people, and marginalized groups. For long-term unemployed unskilled people and guaranteed minimum assistance recipients, programs for additional vocational education and training to acquire practical skills shall be made available in accordance with the labour market requirements.

We will make a complete reform of active labour market measures such that actual effects can be achieved. The implementation of these measures shall take place within an inclusive process through the integration of the business community and chambers with the Employment Service Agency. The system of employment service provision shall also be reformed. We will identify the number of scarce jobs, for which we will provide state-funded retraining programs.

In terms of improving the situation, we will foresee the following:

- The state shall provide public sector employees with the opportunity to find work in the private sector more easily.
- Greater flexibility of working hours for new parents in the first years of parenthood (working from home, flexibility in using working hours during the week in accordance with the employer's work arrangement).
- Greater flexibility of working hours for those employees who strive for further education and training.

- A probation period for new hires where employers would have the flexibility to evaluate their performance within the first month of their employment.
- We will completely change the concept of occupational safety and health, which shall primarily focus on prevention.

We will make a complete classification, systematization and optimization of the laws and by-laws that regulate the areas of labour policy and social protection policy.

○ NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHY PLAN

The Government undertakes to put demographic development first as an area of crucial importance to economic development, state stability and national security. Macedonia is facing a growing problem of depopulation caused by the long-term negative natural population growth, as well as the growing number of young and educated people who decide to leave Macedonia. Therefore, models for demographic renewal, stimulation of staying in Macedonia and employment must be directed towards this, both institutionally and programmatically.

For these reasons, we will focus on the protection and support of families, especially those with multiple children, and we will adopt a new approach to young people, which will provide them with affordable education, a favourable standard of living and human dignity in order to reduce the number of those who are forced to leave Macedonia. One of the most important conditions for improving Macedonia's demographic picture is job stability and security and open business opportunities, especially for young people, with incomes that can cover the average consumer basket cost and child-rearing costs.

Aware of the demographic challenges facing Macedonia and the deteriorating fertility rates, the Government will improve existing and introduce new measures to support parents, namely by:

- Increased one-off financial support for a first-born child.
- A drastic increase in one-off financial support for a second-born child.
- Introduction of one-off financial support for twins, third-born and every subsequent child delivered.

For employed mothers, we are envisaging additional financial support after the end of their maternity leave, namely:

- One-year personal income tax refund paid for a first-born child.
- Two-year personal income tax refund paid for a second-born child.
- Personal income tax refund paid for the third-born and each subsequent child, which will last until the first-born child comes of age.

Regarding any companies employing mothers of three or more children, we will provide exemption from paying their mandatory health insurance contributions and unemployment insurance contributions in case of unemployment, as well as personal income tax, within a period of three years as from the date of employment, with the obligation that the mother's employer shall keep the mother in her workplace for as many years as the measure is used.

We will introduce the possibility for every woman, regardless of her financial status or the number of children she has, to be entitled to up to six free in vitro fertilizations.

The Government will re-establish and improve the Buy a House measure for young people through: paying monthly instalment subsidies for building a house or paying down payment subsidies while obtaining a house-building loan; for young couples who will move to the countryside, a program will be developed that shall provide one-off financial support for buying, building or extending a house. We envisage the sale of state-owned undeveloped land at a preferential price per square meter, as well as a number of free-of-charge house-building design types that would further reduce the costs for the family, and we will also support energy-efficient renovation of young people's homes.

It shall be a top priority for the Government within its mandate to work on creating conditions for reducing the waiting lists for kindergarten admissions. The lack of kindergartens is one of the reasons for the low birth rate and a pronounced country's total population drop. In order to achieve quick results, we will work on converting public institutions' unused space.

Expanding the network of preschool childcare and upbringing institutions is our priority, with the aim of reducing the waiting lists for admission of children to kindergartens and opening new businesses for greater involvement of parents in the labour market. This financial assistance shall include a tax exemption of up to 30,000 euros for opening a private kindergarten or equipment purchase, depending on childcare capacity and facility location.

In addition, we also foresee construction land sale on favourable terms or unused state-owned buildings rental, while in cooperation with the municipalities, we will provide exemption from communal fees. We undertake to offer several types of designs for the construction of kindergartens with different capacities, in order to reduce the costs of opening new kindergartens.

The special allowance is a monetary compensation that children with disabilities receive up to 26 years of age. As a Government, we undertake to increase the three types of beneficiaries' support each year of our mandate in line with living costs increase and thus, support the financial situation and living conditions of the most vulnerable groups of

citizens in our country. We are introducing assistants and professional associates in preschool facilities as part of their educational process that will enable active and equal participation for all children. In doing so, we will provide opportunities for the maximum development of the potential of each child.

Children placed under guardianship, most often because of the death of their parents, shall be cared for in the family of by their close relatives. Currently, these families do not receive any compensation. Therefore, as a responsible Government, we will enable these families to receive childcare allowance in the amount of minimum wage to cover for the costs of such children.

We also foresee an increase in the number of foster families by increasing the allowance per foster child.

The Government shall define a systemic and comprehensive support program for people returning from abroad. For this purpose, we foresee the following:

- Companies shall be exempted from paying personal income tax for a period of one year regarding any persons that have lived abroad for at least one year and will return to live in Macedonia under predefined conditions.
- If any scarce professionals identified under a special program return, such exemption shall also include part of the contributions paid by the company for such professional.
- Measures for opening new companies, that is, business development grants and assistance to any qualified expatriates who decide to open a company in Macedonia.
- Easing the conditions for buying land to build one's own home.
- Facilitated procedures to obtain Macedonian citizenship for Macedonia's expatriates.

We will provide support for the opening of a scientific Institute for Demographic Research, Migration and Population Policies, as part of the new institutional support for dealing with demographic challenges.

○ ENERGY SECTOR AT THE SERVICE OF MACEDONIA

The Government's vision is an ecological, competitive, and stable energy system based on the principles of reliability, efficiency, sustainability, and independence. We envisage serious multi-year and long-term investments in energy infrastructure and facilities that will ensure the country's energy stability and independence, while also including domestic energy production as a guarantee for the Macedonian economy competitiveness.

To achieve energy independence, the Government shall take the following measures:

- Continuous and sustainable electricity production.
- Increased utilization of renewable energy sources.
- Increased energy efficiency of both public buildings and households.
- Gasification of households, the economy, and the public sector in Macedonia.
- Functional and efficient power transmission system.
- Improved quality of the electricity distribution system.
- Additional development of heating systems.
- Policies for the development of energy; and
- Policies for the development of mining facilities and mineral resources.

The Government shall initiate the electricity supply tariff system review and propose the abolition of the grid access tariff.

We envisage a one-mandate program of grants and favourable loans for 150 thousand households regarding owners of private houses and apartments. This support shall apply to the installation of new energy-efficient facades, windows, and doors, including subsidies for citizens of up to 50% of the price for the purchase and installation of energy-efficient equipment, including: solar collectors, heat pumps and photovoltaic power stations (PVPS) for production of electricity to meet one's own needs.

By changing the existing regulation, households shall get the opportunity to sell their generated electricity surplus under better terms. We also foresee changes in the method of calculation regarding the payment of the excess generated energy sold.

We will develop project and technical documentation to change the fuel type and use clean fuels and technologies for public buildings' heating in Macedonia. In addition, we will invest in converting public buildings' heating systems into systems with solid particle zero emissions.

We will proceed with natural gas distribution network development, thus allowing for gas to be directly available to households, industrial and other economic facilities, and public institutions. In order to further accelerate the gasification process, in populated areas located at a greater distance from gas trunk lines, the construction of natural gas storage facilities shall be started. By such systems, natural gas will reach gas distribution networks in populated areas and be available to anyone wanting to use it. Within this measure, it is foreseen to subsidize the connection to the distribution network in order to provide natural gas for every household.

By the construction of distribution networks and natural gas storage facilities, it is expected to reduce the costs of citizens and other economic entities for heating and hot water use, and to significantly reduce air pollution.

The State Inspectorate's capacity for technical inspection shall be strengthened in order to improve power quality in terms of ensuring stable voltage values to end consumers.

The Government foresees investments in the mining and energy combine (MEC) "Bitola." To extend the life of thermoelectric power plants within MEC "Bitola," the opening of new Zhivojno mines is planned. With new quantities of coal, stable operation of Bitola TPP shall be ensured in the coming period by the utilization of primarily domestic resources instead of increased coal imports from abroad.

We will implement the revitalization and modernization of Bitola TPP, thus providing more positive effects in terms of:

- Reducing the emissions of SO_x and dust within their limit values according to the EU Directives and acquis.
- Improving the ambient air in the surrounding of MEC "Bitola" and the city of Bitola.
- Positive impact on climate change.
- Reducing the plant noise.
- Gypsum production and its possible placement on the market.
- Socio-economic aspects and improved conditions for both the employees and the population living around MEC "Bitola."
- Reducing respiratory diseases and external costs (reduced absenteeism, reduced drug costs).

The Government shall consider possibilities to extend the working life of Oslomej TPP through its modernization. The approach implies increased efficiency of the block and reduction of emissions of CO₂, SO_x, NO_x, and dust in accordance with the EU-permitted emission limit values.

The Government shall plan Negotino TPP gasification and extension of this energy facility's work life.

The Government envisages a power plant with high environmental standards that would be an energy generation facility in Bitola to start the MEC "Bitola" energy transition.

The Government will consider any possibilities to plan and finance a mining and energy complex in Eastern Macedonia.

By its comprehensive activities, the Government will implement a central heating project in Bitola, Mogila and Novaci.

For the purpose of reducing harmful gas emissions and pollution, the construction of a gas cogeneration plant for providing electricity and heating is planned in the surroundings of Skopje, such that it shall be possible to plan the development of a heating distribution network. We foresee the extension of the heat energy distribution network to most of the city of Skopje.

Guided by the experience of the professional public, and as a result of all failed tenders so far, we will have a new feasibility study prepared, which shall provide an opportunity to optimize and select the best project for the use of the Crna River basin from Tikveš HPP to the Rasimbeg Bridge.

We envisage the construction of a tunnel to divert the waters from the Vardar River into the Treska River and achieve their maximum energy utilization in the three hydroelectric power plants of Kozjak, Sveta Petka and Matka. The Government shall start with the creation of a financial structure thereof in cooperation with international financial institutions regarding the development of this project documentation and construction.

We are planning the construction of six small hydropower plants along the course of the Zletovica River, near the Kneževo Dam and two in the vicinity of Probištip and Kratovo Municipalities.

The Government will actively work on diversification of power generation sources by:

- Completing the Bogdanci Wind Park;
- Supporting investments in a new wind park on the stretch along Štip, Radoviš and Karbinci;
- Miravci Wind Park;
- A wind park on the mountain massif of Ilinska, Plakenska and Bigla;
- In the coming period, the Government will, at an intensified pace, proceed with the implementation of the following gasification projects: construction of the Gostivar–Kichevo Gas Trunk Line; construction of the Sveti Nikole–Veles Gas Trunk Line; design development for the Bitola–Resen–Ohrid–Struga Gas Trunk Line; construction of a branch for Negotino TPP.
- Interconnection gas pipelines with Greece, Serbia, and Kosovo.

The Government will work on the reconstruction and completion of the power transmission network throughout the country to ensure electricity quality transmission.

The Government will work on a battery energy storage system.

We will improve the legislation by passing a Law on Geological Exploration and a Law on Mining, which shall regulate geological research and exploitation of mineral resources in accordance with the principle of rational and sustainable environment exploitation and

protection. We will develop a Strategy for the sustainable use and exploitation of minerals, including the implementation of a cadastre of mineral deposits and occurrences.

We will regulate the exploitation of sand from riverbeds with the aim of maintaining the stability of rivers and creating equal legal conditions for entities maintaining riverbeds.

In the coming period, the Government will endeavour to have mines opened near Stogovo, Tajmishte, Plavica (Crn Vrv) and Lojane.

○ DEVELOPED AGRICULTURE

In its coming four-year term, the Government has a plan and vision for the revitalization of agricultural policies. We are planning reforms that will deeply address the most essential issues and challenges burdening farmers. Our commitment is to adjust Macedonian agricultural policy to that of the European Union by increasing competitiveness.

Better living conditions in rural areas shall be ensured through active measures to stop the depopulation process in these areas. By an active attitude of all societal stakeholders, and mostly of farmers themselves, we will enable them to be at the centre of the creation of measures and instruments for their support. The primary mission of our policies shall be the construction of a sustainable agricultural and food sector that will provide adequate income to farmers and sufficient food production at affordable prices for the population of Macedonia.

Therefore, our focus shall be on the following three main goals:

- Increase competitiveness and improve farmers' income.
- Introduce modern technologies and innovations to reduce the adverse climate change impact.
- Develop rural areas in order to retain their population, especially young people, through investment in infrastructure and investments for new jobs in these areas.

We are committed to reforming the method of funds allocation, where we will put our focus on providing support intended for active farmers. By providing several types of financial support, the maximum amount of which would be up to 180 million euros per year, we are planning to increase the share of the rural development program.

We are planning to strengthen our capacity to use pre-accession funds from the EU – IPARD as additional funds to support investments and rural development.

Direct payment measures shall help farmers to ensure stable income levels.

In order to implement the rural development policy measures, a multi-year rural development budget program will be introduced, where the overall budget shall be determined at the beginning of such program and implemented continuously. This shall be done for a longer period of time, including the IPARD period, thus reaching full compatibility between the national program objectives and the EU instrument, while accelerating the development pace.

In order to build a sustainable and competitive agricultural sector, with satisfied producers making adequate revenues and thus improving the livelihood quality in Macedonian villages, agricultural policies shall be implemented, including measures to support both revenues and investments in the rural development program.

Direct payments shall be the main farmers' income support measure. Farmers shall be subject to due diligence in order for the measure funds to reach active farmers and sectors suffering significant damages in the past. For the purpose of transforming the measure and development direction thereof, a new agricultural production regionalization and support of eligible production by regions will be made. We will proceed with developing the dynamics for this measure transformation in order to harmonize this measure with the EU common agricultural policy measures, making sure that this process does not harm any of the sectors.

Our focus shall be put on the traditional livestock branches, primarily sheepherding, goat breeding and cattle breeding. In these branches, we will significantly increase our support of up to 50%, putting special emphasis on broiler production. We will also increase our support in the production of meat, milk, and eggs.

In crop production, we will retain the payments per surface area, such that we will reduce the number of sub-measures to facilitate the application process for farmers. Regarding certain strategic produce, additional payments for yield delivered shall be created, with the aim of further strengthening the competitiveness of these sectors during this transitional period.

Investments are key to increasing competitiveness and improving farmers' income. Our goal is intensive support for investment projects of farm holdings. By providing grants in the amount of more than 50% (depending on the type of projects), any projects extending and modernizing farm holdings shall be supported, thus establishing produce standards that will contribute to produce quality.

In order to improve farmers' market competitiveness and enhance agricultural produce marketing, significant funds shall be allocated to investments by which farmers will add value to their primary products. In addition, these investments will enable delayed

produce supply in order to avoid produce supply peaks and price drops, thus contributing to the preservation of some traditional processed food products.

As a responsible Government, we will also focus on supporting the introduction of modern technologies and innovations reducing the adverse climate change impact. To ensure the agricultural sector and food production sustainability, our main commitment is to implement the recommendations of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy, which is positioned at the heart of the European Green Deal. A significant goal of the Farm to Fork Strategy is to achieve organic agricultural production on an area amounting to 25% of the total arable area.

In order to increase the agricultural produce processing competitiveness for the purpose of ensuring primary agricultural produce reliable placement at a time of increased market supply, we will continuously invest in food processing facilities.

The Government shall take actions to help restart the winemaking facilities.

For the purpose of improving this business activity and implementing its programs efficiently, new legislation shall be adopted to align the responsibilities of water companies and other institutions in this business. Efforts shall be made to improve the capacity of state water inspectors.

The Government will intensify its action plan for the reconstruction of existing and construction of new irrigation systems and water infrastructure, in order for farmers to successfully cope with global warming and climate change effects.

Development plans shall be drawn up for each hydro-system, including water balance and crops therein, while also identifying the needs for rehabilitation, modernization, digitalization and spatial presentation of water management facilities and irrigated areas, including water user records. Pumping stations shall be modernized, new ones shall be procured where necessary, and also water management information systems shall be connected with the other systems established in the Ministry.

We are planning some investments aimed at the existing water management infrastructure in the following hydro-systems: Sveti Nikole Water Management, Bregalnica HMS – Kochani, Tikvesh HMS – Kavadarci, Lipkovo HMS – Kumanovo, Turija HMS – Strumica, Polog Water Management – Gostivar. We also foresee the realization of phases 2 and 3 of the Zletovica Hydro-system for irrigation of 4,500 hectares of agricultural land, as well as the realization of the Plavaja River catchment near the village of Podarash in Radovish area with multiple purposes, including: water supply, irrigation, and energy utilization.

In the fight against climate change, the preservation of trees and forests in Macedonia is a top priority. Therefore, we will offer a novel approach to the development of forestry activities, which shall entail new information technologies' introduction and a modern forestry information system establishment.

In order to retain the population living in rural areas, especially young people, we envisage systemic and structural infrastructure investments and new jobs in these areas. In this way, we will reduce emigration, while providing a chance for residents' return to rural areas. We envisage the following measures: grants to young farmers; support for women farmers' projects; support for agricultural cooperatives in rural areas and support for the establishment of producers' organizations and intersectoral organizations; support for the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas; financial support for young married couples returning to rural areas and starting their business; investments in projects to improve infrastructure in villages; support of local action groups for projects in rural areas; support for the preservation of rural landscapes and their traditional characteristics.

It is particularly important to join the Ministry and other institutions responsible for agricultural policy implementation into a single system. This shall ensure that there are no delays in measures and instruments' implementation. Thus, farmers shall be completely free from any obligations to go to institutions to obtain various documents. It will contribute to quick information about market conditions and produce placement as one of farmers' more serious issues.

The use and management of agricultural land is also the fundamental systemic weakness of the sector. It is our goal to upgrade the policies for more efficient agricultural land management. We will also intensify the process of consolidation and allocation of state-owned land. The Government envisages the establishment of an Agricultural Land Management Agency that shall take over all activities for the complete and efficient management of agricultural land and pastures. The goal is to have a successful agricultural land consolidation process and full agricultural land utilization.

The Government will provide an instrument that shall allow for easier access to capital for produce buyers, thus guaranteeing the payment to agricultural producers.

Our top priority will be to maintain a prominent level of citizens' public health by strengthening the integrated food safety system. For this purpose, the quality controls of pesticides, fertilizers, seeds, and seedlings shall be strengthened to protect farmers from low-quality products.

We are planning effective support of fisheries and aquaculture through a special program covering fish production and protection of Macedonia's fish stocks.

○ DEVELOPED AND FUNCTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Government will start implementing projects for building modern and functional infrastructure, which shall contribute to a better flow of goods and services. We will be creating an infrastructure that shall facilitate the movement of passengers across the country at the national, regional, and local levels, and enhance all road users' safety.

We will invest in road infrastructure by building highways, expressways, main roads, regional and local roads. The focus of our investments will also be the communal infrastructure through the construction of water, stormwater, and faecal sewage systems in all populated areas throughout the country. We will invest in railway infrastructure through the construction and reconstruction of railway lines and the purchase of trains.

Our goal and vision are to restore and increase economic development, move forward and fully complete all backlogged projects to which we will give new impetus and quality, while also offering and implementing new projects that shall mean an improvement in the quality of Macedonian citizens' lives.

The Government undertakes to get the following highways completed:

- Kichevo – Ohrid highway completion.
- Skopje – Blace highway completion.
- Kichevo – Bukojchani highway completion.

The Government will take serious steps to optimize and streamline the costs, deadlines, dynamics, priority, and conditions for the construction of Corridors 8 and 10D agreed sections.

We are committed to the construction and design of the following expressways:

- Completing the construction of the expressway from Gradsko to Prilep.
- Completing the construction of the expressway from Rankovce to Kriva Palanka.
- Construction of a ring-road expressway from Bitola to the Medjitlija Border Crossing at the border with Greece.
- Document preparation for the construction of a state ring-road around Resen.
- Development of a study and project documentation for the Veles – Chashka – Prilep expressway.
- Project documentation development for the Strumica – Novo Selo – Novo Selo Border Crossing expressway at the border with Bulgaria.
- Project documentation development for Strumica – Valandovo – Smokvica expressway.
- Project documentation development for the Bitola – Resen expressway.
- Project documentation development for the Resen – Ohrid expressway.

- Project documentation development for the Kavadarci – Negotino expressway (connection to Corridor 10).
- Project documentation development for the Kochani – Vinica – Delchevo expressway.
- Project documentation development for the Radovish – Strumica road widening.

With engaged work, we envisage the design, construction, and reconstruction of numerous regional roads in all parts of the country, while paying attention to regional development.

It is required to design and build ring-roads around the urban cores of a number of cities across the country. In addition to facilitating and shortening road sections, traffic and the environment in urban centres will be protected by this approach.

For this purpose, within our coming mandate, we will work on the design, construction, or completion (depending on the possibilities and project development level) of ring-roads in the following cities: Tetovo, Shtip, Prilep, Veles, Bitola, Kavadarci, Resen and Ohrid.

The rehabilitation and reconstruction of highways, main and regional roads throughout the country shall be the focus of the Government's work.

We will work intensely on the reconstruction of bridges, rehabilitation of landslides, retaining walls, tunnels, and other road structures. Main and regional roads will be continuously maintained and protected.

We will enable electronic payment at all toll stations in Macedonia, which shall result in much better traffic flow on our roads and reduced corruption.

The Government will work on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Railway Corridor 10. We will have a conceptual design prepared, including a feasibility study, and an overhaul shall be performed on Corridor 10 (Tabanovce – Gevgelija) railway line as the busiest railway of significant importance for the Republic of Macedonia.

We also foresee the completion of the Kumanovo – Deve Bair railway construction at the border with Bulgaria. This project envisages continuous work until the full completion of the railway to Bulgaria. Thus, we will finally connect with Bulgaria by rail as part of Corridor 8. The benefits of this project are huge in terms of both passenger and freight rail transport.

The Government will work on the reconstruction, rehabilitation and electrification of the following railway sections: Skopje – Kichevo as part of Corridor 8; Veles – Bitola as part of 10d section; Veles – Kochani, development of a conceptual design and feasibility study for the construction of a new Shtip – Strumica and the Republic of Bulgaria railway line; construction of the Ilinden – Skopje International Airport railway branch.

The Government will foresee the procurement of electric trains and diesel-motor trains, then, general overhaul, including modernization of existing trains, cars, and locomotives. A reorganization of the railway company's operation shall be implemented. The goal is to provide more efficient rail transportation, improve travel conditions, and increase the number of lines.

The Government will work towards putting the passenger railway transport back into use in Macedonia. Based on need and cost assessment by implementing relevant activities and campaigns, we will support the intensification of passenger rail transport throughout Macedonia. We will support regular and optimized passenger rail transport on all sections in the country.

The Government envisages the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and completion of existing ports on the lakes in Macedonia. Construction works are planned for the reinforcement and completion of these ports, including lake depth increase around such ports in order to improve the conditions and increase the number of vessels using the services thereof. These activities would be undertaken in coordination with the local government, environmental associations, and UNESCO.

In the area of urban planning and construction, we will take a systemic approach to reforming this area. This reform shall mean implementation of software tools to ensure zero corruption and a fast, transparent, efficient, and inexpensive way of adopting urban plans.

In the construction sector, we will apply the cutting-edge BIM technology, which will drastically shorten the time for obtaining construction permits and completely exclude the human factor in the decision-making process.

The Government envisages the adoption of a new Law on Urban Planning that shall allow for full data digitization and standardization in all competent institutions, and such data shall be available free of charge through the Government's geo-portal for urbanism and spatial planning. This geo-portal shall be available to any design companies, citizens and interested parties. This way shall provide zero corruption and a fast, transparent, efficient, and inexpensive way of adopting urban plans.

By adequate legislative amendments, it shall be possible for the Agency for Real Estate Cadastre, either ex officio or at the request of the party, to perform the transformation of former landowners' previous right to land use. By this proposal, the very costs of citizens would be significantly reduced, and the entire procedure would be shortened when acquiring the ownership right to the construction land that they actually possess and use.

Also, we will allow for the owners of individual parts of collective residential buildings located on land owned by Macedonia to become owners of an ideal part of the building plot

by force of law. In this way, we will enable the completion of a large number of lengthy administrative procedures where a large number of citizens seek the acquisition of ownership of the land serving the purposes of the building in which they own their individual parts.

The Government will have its entire legislation approximated to the EU acquis in terms of spatial planning and we will use the USA and Japan's best practices for process digitization. Institutions in this area shall be vertically and horizontally connected into a single joint system. Digital data shall be completely free, which will help citizens, institutions, and businesses.

In cooperation between the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Real Estate Cadastre Agency and the City of Skopje, a project program for the construction of Skopje Fair shall be developed. This Fair shall contain an administrative building, a multifunctional hall, offices for use, a parking lot and uniform food sales points. A financing model shall be selected from two alternatives, i.e., state financing as the first option or financing through a public-private partnership tender.

II FRONT AGAINST CORRUPTION

○ JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORM

The Government will commit to the following goals for justice system reforms:

- System solutions for transforming judicial authorities into truly independent, transparent, and accountable efficient entities.
- Introduction of European standards and values in the text of all laws according to the European Rule-of-Law-Checklist principle.
- Justice must come to Macedonia for those unjustly convicted in politically staged cases.
- Protection from conflict of interest and nepotism in the judicial and prosecution system.
- Criminal liability for anyone who has committed a crime under the Republic of Macedonia's Constitution or laws, particularly for those who have illegally enriched at citizens' expense.
- Efficient administrative proceedings in the interest of citizens, thus also ensuring effective and efficient justice for all in these proceedings.

- We will devote our efforts to the protection of citizens from unrealistic and disproportionate costs, while advocating for misdemeanour policymaking solely in citizens' interest.

We will be guided by the following principles:

- The foundations of Macedonian society and its legal system must be democracy, uncompromising rule-of-law principal application and raising both civil and political awareness of the need for the law to apply equally to all.

- The Government is committed to legal, honest, and dedicated work.

- The Republic of Macedonia's laws shall apply equally to all citizens, regardless of their ethnic, religious, gender and other affiliation. The rule of law as imperative in a European democratic state implies much more than just a lip-service commitment to respecting the laws. It also means a developed awareness of the need for a society where laws shall be respected and implemented, but above all, be fair and just while being implemented efficiently and non-selectively.

The Government will offer new system solutions to transform the judicial authorities into truly independent, transparent, responsible, and efficient entities that are the foundation of a normal democratic society.

The Government will dedicate itself to freeing the judiciary from the executive power constraints and implementing policies to clear up the judiciary conflict of interest, nepotism, partisanship, and cronyism. Legal criteria for the ranking of candidates for judges and court presidents shall be established and the procedures for taking over and transferring judges to other courts shall be regulated.

Through a comprehensive reform, the selection of judges from lower-ranking candidates coming from the Academy of Judges shall be limited, while the Judicial Council shall provide a concrete explanation regarding its final selection. We will respect the recommendations of assessment missions and the European Union regarding the requirements for the selection of judges at all judiciary levels, which shall be based on clear rules and criteria incorporated into a merit system.

We envisage the dissolution and legal reform of the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors. Within a transitional period, the Government will initiate legal changes that shall establish strict and objectively measurable criteria to be met by any new members elected upon the proposal of the Assembly and the President of the State. The procedure shall be transparent and public, thus ensuring the integrity and quality of candidates selected. The Government will also initiate a process of changing the

Constitution in terms of regulating the composition of the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors, where it will propose a solution for the selection of members thereof by the judges and public prosecutors themselves, where the candidates shall meet high personal and professional criteria. During the process of Judicial Council legal reform, we will take into account all recommendations from the European Union and good European practices.

In relation to the Judicial Council's internal decision-making procedures, we will establish a clearly defined procedure for the election and dismissal of the Judicial Council President, a mandatory explanation of the decisions made by the Judicial Council, as well as increased decision-making transparency, including the presence of the general public and the media.

By legal amendments we will raise and specify the criteria for the possibility of judges' promotion, where a mandatory evaluation of their work as judges shall be introduced.

In accordance with the highest European standards, the Government will work and initiate the adoption of a new legal framework in the area of judiciary. We will initiate the adoption of a completely new Criminal Code following the example of several justice systems similar to ours, the Law on Public Prosecutor's Office, the Law on Courts, the Law on Judicial Council, the Law on Criminal Procedure, the Law on the Council of Public Prosecutors, and other necessary laws.

We will introduce legal mechanisms to protect against conflicts of interest in the judiciary, while limiting the possibilities of nepotism influence, partisanship, and cronyism in the decision-making of the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors in their procedures for the selection, promotion, dismissal and evaluation of judges and public prosecutors.

By amending our legal regulations, the Judicial Council shall, after passing any decision to dismiss a judge, submit a report on the procedure for such judge dismissal, including all supporting documents thereto, to the competent Public Prosecutor's Office, with the aim of checking any possible violation of the Criminal Code.

In case of different court rulings by the same or different court, and in connection with the same or similar merits of the case, by amendments to the Law on Courts, a provision shall be introduced for the Supreme Court to adopt a principled position in any cases of unequal application of laws.

The Law will provide for the initiation of a procedure on the liability of a judge whose decisions or judgments were established by the Strasbourg Court to have violated human rights and freedoms. In order to guarantee the highest level of human rights, we will

envisage by law for the president of each court to appoint a human rights protection commissioner from among the judges therein. The duties and methods of action of such human rights protection commissioner judge shall be provided for in the amendments to the Law on Courts.

Legal amendments will also contain a provision that the Judicial Council shall notify any citizens filing requests regarding the liability of any judge on the decision the Judicial Council has rendered thereon. If, following a citizen's complaint, a judge is found liable for unprofessional and negligent performance of his/her duties, the Judicial Council shall inform such citizen of their right to request compensation for the damage suffered.

By amending the Law on Criminal Procedure, it will be possible for journalists, academia, and professional public representatives to attend any hearings on issuing detention. In this way, it will be impossible to influence the prosecutorial and judicial system to use the detention measure as punishment rather than as a measure to ensure presence in criminal proceedings.

The judiciary shall be completely independent and separate from the Public Prosecutor's Office, which is a unique and independent state authority by law. The Public Prosecutor's Office is a party in proceedings before courts, as are lawyers. It is because of this that the education of judges and public prosecutors shall be separate, in order to prevent any possible influences and abuses during the conduct of proceedings.

We will dynamize the judiciary digitization process, introduce e-service of process and electronic submission of requests for document issuance by courts.

A procedure will be initiated to audit and examine the legality of the entire operation of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, with special attention being paid to human right violations made within the SPO's procedures, procedural law breaches during the SPO's actions, resolution of any abuses identified in the payment of funds to prosecutors, investigators and advisers and return thereof to the budget, as well as investigating any nepotism, partisanship and cronyism in the SPO's employments.

The current Council of Public Prosecutors has lost its credibility and it shall be dissolved. Legal amendments will introduce strict and objective criteria for the selection of this Council Members. We will define clear, strict and high scoring criteria for the process of selection of Council Members who shall be elected by the Republic of Macedonia's Parliament. The procedure shall be transparent and public, thus ensuring the selection of best candidates. Any proposed candidates shall be required to provide a work program with clearly defined performance indicators. During the legal reform process regarding the Council of Public Prosecutors, we will take into account the highest European standards.

Public prosecutors shall be selected from the list of best candidates who have successfully completed their training at the Academy for Prosecutors. By legal amendments, we will raise and specify the criteria for the possibility of public prosecutors' promotion, where a mandatory evaluation of prosecutors' work shall be introduced. By amending our legal regulations, the Council of Public Prosecutors shall, after making a decision to dismiss a prosecutor, submit a report on the procedure for such prosecutor dismissal, including any supporting documents, to the competent Public Prosecutor's Office, in order to check for any possible law violations.

We will detail the legal periods for preliminary investigation action, including a liability provision for any public prosecutors who have not acted within the legally defined period.

By amending the Law on Civil Procedure, the number of grounds for filing a motion for revision to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Macedonia will be reviewed and increased, thus providing conditions for effective and efficient justice.

The Law on Criminal Procedure shall be fully harmonized with the principles of the European Court of Human Rights, namely the procedure for imposing a detention measure shall be regulated in order to prevent any abuse of this measure. At the same time, the defense rights shall be enhanced, including the periods for filing appeals regarding any decisions not agreed by the parties; then, the rights of crime victims and criminal proceedings' injured parties shall also be enhanced.

An amendment to the Law on Criminal Procedure will provide a mandatory procedure where the court shall initially assess if there are any possibilities to issue a bail order.

In order to reduce the costs of court and legal proceedings of state institutions, public enterprises, local government units and institutions thereof, including companies in dominant state ownership where there is adequate staff, any outsourcing with regard to procedures not exceeding a three million denar value shall be prohibited.

Court access shall be provided to vulnerable groups of citizens through the introduction of a mandatory exemption from court fees for users of any benefits as in the Social Protection Law, including any persons whose income is less than the minimum wage and persons with no real estate to their name.

Investments will be made in the reconstruction of penitentiary institutions with the aim of reaching European standards in the serving of sentences.

○ SYSTEMIC FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

The priority of the new Government will be a merciless fight against corruption and punishments for corrupt public office holders. Through digitization of services, the subjective human factor in decision-making processes shall be reduced. An efficient system for prevention, supervision and audit of the public institutions' operation shall be established. A decisive, non-selective and uncompromising fight against corruption and the rule of law is a prerequisite for Macedonia's economic growth and development.

The Government will establish a coordinating body to fight corruption. This body shall work to unify the anti-corruption efforts of all government institutions and organizations.

Reinforced with quality staff and resources, the State Audit Office (SAO) shall be the institution to prevent and recognize corruption risks. We envisage a systemic linkage between the State Audit Office and the Public Prosecutor's Office, including an obligation for the Public Prosecutor's Office to review SAO reports. As a pillar of the system for the prevention of corruption and conflict of interest, the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) shall have all the human and material resources required to fulfil its task fully and efficiently, particularly in terms of checking the property status of elected and appointed officials. Through legal amendments, an obligation shall be foreseen for the Public Prosecutor's Office to act as a priority on any cases and initiatives submitted by the SCPC.

The Government will develop a program to investigate and establish the origin of assets of judges, public prosecutors, political officials, and public sector senior managers. To that end, we will especially focus on increasing the number of procedures for establishing the origin of property regarding all government levels, state, and public institutions, including high-level managers highly suspected of corruption. We are planning to extend the scope of sanctions and the amount thereof related to any violation of the rules on conflict of interest, integrity, and prevention of corrupt practices through amendments to the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest. These changes shall be aimed at meeting the prerequisites for efficiency, proportionality, and deterrence. A program shall be developed for a comprehensive audit of the entire operation of a number of institutions the operation of which raises suspicions of corruption.

By an inclusive program, the single Public Procurement System shall be connected to the Public Sector Employees Register, ESA, PRO, Cadaster, the Central Registry, the Population Register and other systems required. In this way, the single Public Procurement System will automatically identify, report and publish conflicts of interest and corruption risks in public procurement. This Register will prevent abuses related to the persons

involved in public procurements in terms of preparation and evaluation thereof, including competing companies taking part in such public procurements. In addition, the transparency of the single Public Procurement System will increase by increasing the amount of data and the frequency of reports published.

To improve the internal audit system, we will increase the number of internal auditors in both state and public institutions and establish an Audit Committee as a new central body to monitor the implementation of any recommendations given by internal auditors and the State Audit Office. All state institutions shall have integrity officers, certified with licenses for the implementation of international standards on anti-corruption management and whistleblower protection. All institutions, public enterprises and companies in dominant state ownership shall publicly disclose the State Audit Office's reports and other audit firms' reports.

The discretionary powers of institutions' managers shall be limited and reduced by law. Each institution shall be responsible for developing and publicly disclosing a list of all discretionary powers held by its management structures. We will also develop a plan by which all state institutions' official vehicles shall be marked with license plates in a specific color for their recognition.

According to an established program, we will create a specialized digital platform to hold training on integrity, recognition, prevention and stopping of corruption in the public sector.

By legal amendments, state institutions shall implement the anti-corruption management standard. This international standard enables the introduction and certification of a system for efficient, measurable and visible mechanisms, procedures and processes for the prevention, detection and handling of corruption in every state institution.

III RULE OF LAW IN INSTITUTIONS

○ POLITICAL SYSTEM REFORMS

The Macedonian political system is in dire need of democratic reform. Therefore, the Government will promote a policy of understanding and cooperation in such reform process, advocating for the national consensus principle. We will strive to achieve as comprehensive a political consensus as possible in policymaking and implementation of projects and policies with long-term significance and value for the country. To that end, the Government will support comprehensive discussions in the Assembly on: amendments to the

Constitution providing for the establishment of a 90 MPs Assembly, as well as systemic legal reforms for: introducing a single constituency for the election of MPs for the Macedonian Assembly with an electoral threshold as per other European countries; abolishing the electoral census for President election, in line with the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations; abolishing the concept of election- conducting Government (the so-called Technical Government); reforming the Constitutional Court; and introducing a possibility of mayor dismissal.

To enhance the efficient and functional work of state administration bodies, a complete reorganization of existing ministries shall be carried out, as well as a reduction of state administration bodies and institutions. To that end, the Government will make efforts to optimize institutions by abolishing the deputy director positions, reducing the number of management and supervisory boards and creating a centralized system for joint administrative and logistical affairs in smaller institutions.

Fully respecting the constitutional principle of adequate and fair representation of citizens belonging to all communities in Macedonia, the Government will amend the existing legislation with the aim of abandoning the Balancer tool in employment. In this way, personal qualities, expertise, competence, and the merit system shall be primarily observed during employment in state institutions.

In the process of upgrading the e-Population Register system, the Government will create conditions for the implementation of a digital population census in 2026.

The Government will actively work on introducing an easily accessible register of laws, as well as reducing unnecessary laws, rules, and procedures, which aggravate doing business and overall living.

○ **SMART MACEDONIA – AVAILABLE PUBLIC SERVICES**

By a systemic approach, we will advance the public sector digital transformation. The Ministry of Digital Transformation shall work on policymaking, regulation, initiation, and implementation of programs regarding digital transformation of society and public services, including the areas of electronic communications and media. In order to unify the capacities and increase the number of activities for information society development and digital transformation promotion, the Government will propose a new National ICT Strategy. In addition, in order to deal with cyber threats, we envisage the adoption of a national Cyber Security Strategy and a Cyber Security Law.

We will actively work on building the infrastructure required to champion this transformation and we will develop services available to all citizens. The focus will be put

on modern digital infrastructure development, an artificial intelligence platform development, strengthening the public sector capacity to work with data, public services full digitization, mobile services introduction, training of citizens to use digital services, digital inclusion of persons with disabilities and cyber security. The Government will help municipalities in their digitalization towards a smart city system. This system will contribute primarily to raising the quality of life (parking, traffic management, public transport, air, and water quality).

Upon identifying the zones where operators have no commercial interest in providing electronic communication networks/services (white zones), the Government will develop a plan for providing the required networks/services to citizens. In order to reduce the digital divide, the Government will provide an internet access opportunity to every household in Macedonia, including any households located in areas where operators have no commercial interest. Efforts will also be made to sign an agreement on reducing the roaming service prices with other countries, especially with the EU Member States.

The Government will actively consider the possibilities of assigning radio frequencies to a third mobile network operator. Thus, a reliable network for public communication services will be ensured, as well as greater competition in the provision of these services.

In terms of developing the 5G network, the Government will implement some measures and activities to achieve the following results: by the end of 2025, all main road routes in Macedonia shall be covered by 5G; and by the end of 2030, all citizens of Macedonia shall have the opportunity to access 5G with an access speed of at least 100 Mbps.

In order to provide digital services to citizens, efficient and easy use thereof, and reduce the possibilities for corruption, the Government foresees as follows:

- Digital (electronic) identity for every citizen, thus allowing citizens to be recognized in the digital space (e-ID).
- Digitization of the most frequently used public services by citizens and companies, according to a specially determined methodology for public service digitization.
- Introduction of a single National Portal for services at both national and local levels, including a mobile app for citizen services available on smartphones.
- Public publication of each institution's Service Catalogue, including mandatory period of action.
- E-reminders for renewal of documents.
- Full interoperability between all state and local institutions, through a data cloud via which administrative officials will be able to quickly obtain all required evidence and documents and have their service delivery significantly accelerated and automated.

- In central locations across several cities, we will set up terminals where citizens, assisted by employees, will be able to obtain multiple services and documents from institutions.

○ PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

Public administration work shall be based solely on the principles of efficiency, transparency, professionalism, accountability, and service availability. The Government will strive for efficient administration that is fully focused on fast and quality service delivery, while eliminating any unnecessary bureaucratic procedures. Measures and activities shall be clustered in key areas aligned with the European Strategic Framework of Public Administration Reform (SIGMA). By implementing these reforms, the future Government aims to create a public administration that will influence regaining citizens' trust in state institutions and be an economic growth catalyst.

The Government will commit to strengthening the administration's potential and building highly qualified and well-trained professionals, who shall be involved in a comprehensive process of continuous education. The career system shall mean defining clear and objective paths for career advancement and professional development of each employee. In the process of human resource management, the Government will foresee some mechanisms for adequate evaluation of administrative servants' work, opportunities for promotion and remuneration, while considering the personal contribution of employees, their performance appraisal, participation in work groups and years of service. A Portal for free circulation of administrative servants shall be activated to operate as a single system of human resource management at the entire public administration level. Due to the lack of professionals in public sector scarce professions, the Government will provide benefits for the recruitment and retention of such staff, with the aim of better quality and timely service provision to citizens. Work will also be done on promoting the job positions of administrative servants and their new job levels in order to adequately valorise the work of all administrative workers.

By applying European experiences and assessments, we envisage to have a 10% cut in the total number of state administration bodies, institutions, and public enterprises. Any institutions with similar or related competences shall be merged into a single institution, thus reducing the number of directors, management, and supervisory boards, as well as any unnecessary costs. We will introduce an electronic document management system in all state administration bodies and digitization of all internal processes, including archival and administrative operations. An assessment will be made of any needs to disperse some state institutions to other cities in Macedonia.

We will work on centralizing the efforts for applying and managing projects related to Macedonia's EU integration into a National Agency for European Projects, which shall integrate the institutions and departments responsible for programming of European projects, implementation thereof, supervision and monitoring of project implementation.

In order to improve inspections' work and coordination, we are planning to transform the Council of Inspection Authorities into a coordinating body of inspection services' directors. The number of inspection authorities shall match the number of ministerial systems.

○ DEVELOPED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Support for modern, transparent, and financially stable municipalities is a principle that will guide the Government in its operations. One of the main principles of the Government will be to evenly develop all regions, which shall be realized through a balanced distribution of funds between planning regions and municipalities.

Financial cooperation enabled by the Government for municipalities will take place within multiple areas and models, where the following principles shall be observed:

- Continuous investment of central budget funds for municipalities' capital infrastructure projects of up to 250 million euros per year.
- Enhancement of municipalities' financial stability by enabling a fair distribution of funds, where the principles of balanced regional development shall be observed.
- Benefits and incentives for municipalities that have well-planned budgets, an important level of realization thereof, and a prominent level of local tax collection.
- Improved methodology for calculation of costs related to municipal educational facilities' maintenance, under which funds shall be paid to municipalities by block grants.

In discussion with local governments, the Government will work on deepening the decentralization process in Macedonia, through a continuously increased devolvement of competences from state administration authorities to local government units in line with the capacities developed in local government units.

IV FUNCTIONAL INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

○ QUALITY HEALTH SYSTEM

The Government's vision is an efficient, effective, and accessible healthcare system for Macedonia's citizens. Our vision places the patient at the centre of all health processes, while providing health care according to patient's needs. The Government will develop a plan for the health system optimization and significant investments to strengthen public health, then, investment in staffing, medical equipment and infrastructure, continuous education and know-how transfer to medical staff in line with best world standards and new methods, including efficient mechanisms established to finance health institutions and the health information system development within the efforts for healthcare digitization. Attention will be paid to regionalization, where health services shall always be available throughout the country's territory and to all health insured persons. The Government will develop and implement a program for integrating and functionally reorganizing health units in secondary health care, through an even regional positioning of all medical facilities in Macedonia.

Through a process of integration and functional reorganization of health units in accordance with the EU acquis, we foresee a functional fusion of the clinics within the Skopje Clinical Centre. In order to terminate the management dualism and bureaucratization, the Government will propose legal amendments to abolish the operational (economic) directors of clinics.

In order to improve the social and health protection of rural areas' population, the Government will provide for incentive measures to encourage health workers to work in rural areas throughout the country.

The Government will prepare and propose to Parliament a National Health Strategy and a Strategy for Young Doctors that will provide the methodology, directions, and ways to support young doctors and enable their dignified work in the health system. In order to standardize and improve medical treatment and introduce evidence-based medicine, we foresee the development of clinical guidelines and hospital operating procedures in all medical facilities in the country.

Within the country's economic possibilities, a plan will be developed for gradual and fair employment of all health facilities' employees who have been working without fixed employment contracts for years, medical staff in scarce professions and increased number of residencies for young medical residents in these professions.

The Government will envisage a continuous growth of capitation value for family doctors and dentists, as well as a revision of medical and dental service packages, in order to provide true labour value. We are planning some policies to provide for the right of deficit areas' doctors to decide whether they will continue to work in public health institutions, while also preserving their right to a pension. In terms of improving the conditions for the medical staff, the Government will work on raising the medical staff status in line with European practices, including the code of practice, education, training, career, and professional discipline. In the process optimization planned, working hours of family doctors shall be streamlined, thus increasing their efficiency and effectiveness, and processes shall be optimized by requiring less administration.

The Government will implement a comprehensive plan for the health system digitization – Paperless Health. It shall include:

- Transparency and waiting list reduction.
- Reduction of administrative responsibilities for medical workers.
- Upgrade of the mobile app for the MojTermin system regarding all health services and benefits.
- Complete digitization of medical prescriptions, referrals, reports, and results.
- Integral and integrated registry of all patients in the form of an E-medical record containing each patient's history of diseases.
- Development of an E-Medical Health Register of Diseases that will provide insight into the number, type, and frequency of diseases in the Republic of Macedonia.
- Development of a fully integrated electronic health system with unified databases, together with the Health Insurance Fund's IT Department on the one hand and all private commercial service providers in the area of health on the other. This system shall have the task of unifying the healthcare system and following the patient's complete path through all segments of the system.
- Strengthening the organ transplantation system by full digitization of processes and organ transplantation list.

In order to improve dental services for citizens, the Government will open a new digital dentistry department and put into operation the on-call dental service of the Dental Clinical Centre "St. Panteleimon" in Skopje.

We will strengthen the screening of malignant diseases, such as breast and uterine cancer, throughout the country and finally introduce prostate cancer screening as per the most modern European practices. We will open a modern centre for in vitro fertilization at the University Clinic of Gynaecology and Obstetrics.

The Government will develop a model to reduce prices and limit margins on medicines and medical equipment. Through increased competition in the pharmaceutical sector, drugs' top quality shall be ensured, and control mechanisms for the procurement and distribution of best quality vaccines for Macedonian population immunization shall be improved. The positive drug list will be revised and continuously updated by including most of the main medications used by citizens.

Children from birth to adulthood, in case of lacking health insurance, shall be separate health insurance holders. The effect of this measure is guaranteed health care for children. A new program for mandatory immunization according to European standards will be developed, which shall include measures aimed at overcoming the negative attitude of certain population groups towards the immunization process.

Efficient and sustainable measures will be taken to ensure adequate and timely therapy for patient groups with chronic diseases, rare diseases, patients with disabilities and malignant diseases.

In order to build a health system that meets citizens' contemporary needs, we will improve the system infrastructure by the following:

- Completion of Shtip's new University Clinical Hospital construction and refurbishing.
- Comprehensive analysis of all previous initiatives, concepts, studies, and projects for the construction of a new Skopje Clinical Centre facility, as well as improvement of the current working conditions at the Clinical Centre "Majka Tereza."
- Infrastructure interventions, further staffing and health service quality raising, as well as connecting with Tetovo University.
- Infrastructure interventions, further staffing and health service quality raising, as well as connecting with Bitola Higher Medical School and Bitola University.
- Modernization and reconstruction of the City General Hospital "8 Septemvri".
- A project for the Surgical Clinic "Sveti Naum Ohridski" in the centre of Skopje to grow into an Emergency Trauma Centre "Sveti Naum Ohridski."
- The Emergency Paediatric Centre at the Clinic for Children's Diseases will be activated.
- Commissioning of the hospital wing in Strumica Hospital.
- Regional Hospital in Ohrid: reorganization of the Cardiology Centre "Sveti Stefan," including the special hospital "Sveti Erazmo" in Ohrid.
- Reconstruction of Veles General Hospital.
- Reconstruction of Prilep General Hospital.
- Completion of Kichevo General Hospital construction and refurbishing; and

- Reconstruction of the psychiatric hospital facility in Demir Hisar.

Any unused equipment will be analysed in all clinics and PHIs and a plan will be developed for the full and efficient use thereof, including a program for such equipment optimization and staff education. In addition, in accordance with needs and possibilities, we will work on modernizing the medical equipment in all PHIs.

The Health Insurance Fund shall strengthen its control mechanism by its full electronic operation and update of its regulations. Thus, any fictitious dispensing of medicines, fictitious invoicing, fictitious persons' treatment, and treatment of persons not belonging to our health system, will be avoided. By changing the budgeting, a gradual transition from the so-called "conditional budget" to a complete cost collection under the system of diagnosis-related groups (DRGs), to the ultimate goal of complete abandonment of "conditional" budgets, shall be achieved. The Health Insurance Fund shall allow for those drugs that are on the positive list and need to be reimbursed, to be picked up from a prescription pharmacy. We envisage an increase in the excise duty on alcohol and cigarettes, thus ensuring additional funds for quality treatment of alcohol and cigarette-use consequences.

○ EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

Education plays a key role in shaping one's personality and identity, with an emphasis on Macedonian identity preservation and promotion, including the economic development, social cohesion, and democracy development in the country. The Government will propose to Parliament a National Education Strategy, adopted by general consensus, which shall include all stakeholders in the educational and scientific process and aim to improve the quality of education in the country. It shall guide the development of curricula, teaching methods, textbooks, digital content, and resources that enhance teaching and learning. The Strategy shall also cover higher education, and support and stimulate scientific research, innovation development, scientific infrastructure investments and attraction of talented researchers. The Government's goals in building an educational system that ensures a better future include:

- Increase of budget funds for education from 3.4% to 5% of the gross domestic product.
- In cooperation with the real sector, increase the funds for applied science to 1% of the gross domestic product.
- Adjust Macedonian education to labour market needs and Macedonia's national needs.

- Comprehensively improve educational infrastructure.
- Create prerequisites for students to advance in global rankings of knowledge.
- Accelerate development of science and significant positioning of at least one Macedonian university in global rankings; and
- Retain young people and realize their potential in Macedonia.

Preschool education shall become a subsystem of the education system since it has a significant impact on the development of children and their preparation for primary education. Preschool programs and primary education programs shall be closely related and provide educational continuity.

Work will be done on a comprehensive review of the Primary Education Concept, including its curricula and programs, for the improvement thereof to ensure greater education inclusion and inter-ethnic integration in education, and provide conditions for applicable theoretical and practical education in line with labour market needs, by strengthening dual education.

The Government will continuously create infrastructural conditions for single-shift instruction and extended stay (full-day instruction) at schools and provide textbooks for each student regarding each subject area in primary and secondary education, starting from the 2025/2026 school year. As to the 2024/2025 school year, the Government undertakes to deliver the prepared textbooks to students in a timely manner.

For the successful implementation of practical education, greater involvement of employers is required, as well as intensified cooperation between both the education and the business sector. Professional orientation and career counselling in primary education shall provide both students and parents with relevant information on various career opportunities and trends in the labour market. In order to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit among students and facilitate the transition from school to employment/self-employment or further education, we will support the opening of real companies in secondary schools. Modern career centres shall have a significant place in secondary schools, which shall guide students regarding their professions.

In the 2025–2028 period, the Government will enable the pilot application of the STEM concept in the educational system, according to parents and students' requests, in a certain number of primary and secondary schools, including some faculties/colleges. We also envisage the establishment of special support centres for working with talented and gifted students.

As an additional motivation, while also highlighting quality and performance, the state will select and reward successful schools or exemplary schools. These schools shall be selected to receive bigger funds than the regular ones for a certain period, which they shall

use in activities related to the professional and personal development of school staff and student benefits.

Programs for school violence prevention and safe school environment will be developed following the examples of European countries. Violence prevention programs shall promote the development of emotional intelligence, empathy, students' mental health support, effective communication, and ways to prevent discomfort, misunderstanding, and peer violence. The Government's focus will be put on the prevention and protection of children and young people as our most valuable social resource. Therefore, we envisage that, unlike now, when schools are guarded by private security companies, the state shall undertake the responsibility for guaranteeing the safety of schools and our youngest – through the establishment of a State Security Company/Agency.

Motivated teaching staff is a necessary condition for improving the quality of education, which is why the Government undertakes to respect social partners representing teachers' rights. We will promote the career advancement of both teachers and professional associates. In cooperation with teaching faculties/colleges, which will grow into state-of-the-art faculties, we are committed to creating the most competent staff with high quality, competencies, and skills, capable of creative and modern education of young people. Any additional education of teachers and professional associates in further postgraduate and doctoral studies shall be valued adequately. The Government will create conditions for opening a Centre for training and development of teachers and professional associates in order to provide training for their capacity-building, learning new skills and work approaches, thus enhancing their motivation and work performance.

We will promote informal education by affirming, publicly promoting, and informing young people about the types of programs and opportunities offered by informal education, while observing the qualification supply quality, simplifying the procedures, and shortening the period for verification of programs and institutions.

The Government will work on systemic support for complete revitalization of Macedonian higher education institutions. We envisage the establishment of a National Coordinating Body for reforms in higher education, science, and research and development, by including representatives of universities and scientific institutions, Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, MES, the business community, and civil society, managed by the Government. Thus, we will completely reinvent the higher education system. It must be based on innovation and dynamic technological development, international cooperation with both European and world-wide higher education institutions to provide a better standard and motivation of teaching staff in terms of scientific research work. Through a comprehensive digitization process, we will enable all higher education to take place through an electronic system.

The Government's vision is to link higher education to the labour market, especially through: supporting the modernization of study programs and teaching and learning methods; developing students' practical work in companies and institutions during their studies; strengthening dual degree programs at higher education institutions; and encouraging measures for enrolling students in the faculties of natural and mathematical, technical and technological, and biotechnical sciences by introducing exemption from co-payment and increased monthly scholarships.

Upon a comprehensive scarce professions assessment, in cooperation with the private sector, a program for the introduction of a scholarship quota to support students in all cycles of their education will be conceptualized. Graduates shall then be employed in both the public and the private sector of the country, thus reducing their emigration and encouraging the selection of these scarce professions.

Science should play a key role in economic growth and overall social development by creating conditions for innovation and productivity improvement. In order to encourage scientific activity that has applicative value for Macedonia, we will stimulate research papers. According to a carefully defined methodology, regarding any papers to be published in impact factor journals that are part of the Web of Science (Thompson Reuters), the publication thereof shall be funded by the state. In addition, the Government undertakes to pay the first-mentioned author a monthly allowance in the amount of 50% of their current monthly salary for a period of one year. The creation of an electronic database of journals and papers is also foreseen, including the subsidization of free access to a number of scientific journals, where all students and scientists from universities in Macedonia will have access.

The Government will map the infrastructural conditions in all educational institutions. During its mandate, the buildings for the Faculty of Physical Culture and FINKI will be completed and commissioned, as per the needs of the Saints Cyril and Methodius University. Infrastructure reconstruction shall promote energy efficiency and renewable energy sources use, including schools and colleges' accessibility, in order to provide better conditions and accessibility for students and employees, especially those with disabilities. Funds intended for the complete renovation and reconstruction of student dormitories will be invested in order to ensure dignified living and learning conditions for students.

Education of persons with disabilities, persons with special educational needs and vulnerable groups of persons is a fundamental human right and society has a duty to provide it. We will advance inclusive education through improved and increased support for students with disabilities, educational assistance, assistive technology, trained teaching staff and inclusive school environments. Public secondary schools for children with disabilities will grow into public secondary schools with a resource centre, while public

secondary schools for children with complex disabilities will transform into public secondary schools with a day centre for work occupation.

During its term of office, the Government will increase the inclusion of Roma children in primary and secondary education. We will continue to support Roma children through educational mediators and scholarships.

○ **CLEAN ENVIRONMENT**

Environmental protection is a way to protect Macedonia's future. The environmental challenges we face as a country link us to the actual challenges everywhere in the world. Our vision is to create conditions for the industry to produce ecological products with a small pollution footprint and increased added value. We are striving for green development, which consists of establishing economic and legal regulations that promote environmentally sustainable economic development.

The Government's program priority commitments in the area of environmental protection shall include:

- A plan to ensure clean air for all.
- Waste management and treatment.
- Macedonian lakes – habitats of supreme national significance.
- Management of water resources, clean water, and river courses.
- Prevention and protection of National Parks.
- Greening of Macedonian cities and mountains.
- Fight against urban noise.
- Protection of all natural resources and fight against climate change.
- Research and eco-innovation support.

The Government will establish an Environment Fund, which shall receive all funds paid by citizens and legal entities as environmental taxes, environmental fees, and other environmental charges. The Green Fund of Macedonia shall support special programs to support innovations and startups working on projects for less pollution, reduction of pollution effects or solutions with no environmental pollution.

The Government will establish mechanisms to set up a central inspection body with powers at all levels, responsible for addressing environmental pollution and waste. Such environmental inspection setup shall provide for efficient and fair inspection of environment polluters.

In order to achieve progress in air quality improvement, we will systematically invest in the enlargement and regular maintenance and operation of the air quality monitoring network, including regular audits of the national automated ambient air quality monitoring system network, which consists of 21 fixed stations and 1 mobile automated monitoring station for ambient air quality. We also envisage expanding the laboratory methods of the Central Laboratory of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and enhancing the Laboratory's capacity. We will introduce a comprehensive system that supports the use of clean fuels in taxi transport such that taxi operators shall be financially relieved to purchase vehicles with no emissions of solid particles and no noise (natural gas and electric vehicles). In addition, we will support municipalities in their construction of bike paths, pedestrian zones, traffic-calming zones (zone 20), etc.

The Government will encourage the use of a greater number of electric vehicles in traffic. To that end, the import and purchase of electric passenger vehicles shall be exempted from paying tax and customs duties, there shall be a 50% reduction in vehicle registration costs, where electric vehicle chargers and an obligation for at least 5% of parking places to be secured for electric vehicles on every public parking lot managed by either public or private companies, shall be introduced.

The Government has coping with climate change as its top priority. The process of dealing with this issue is seen as a chance for technological progress, modernization of production, transport, and energy processes. The four National Parks of Pelister, Galichica, Mavrovo and Shar Planina shall receive systemic financial support to fulfil the primary purpose of their operation – environmental protection. In addition to the afforestation programs of Macedonian Forests, which shall provide for 10 million seedlings a year in rural and mountainous areas, activities for the planting of 500,000 non-allergenic seedlings will be encouraged every year in and around urban centres.

The Government will prepare a comprehensive plan for the protection of potable water and mapping thereof, including wastewater treatment by wastewater treatment plants to achieve 80% coverage of the country with wastewater treatment systems. The Government will also draft a thorough analysis and an action plan for the Ohrid, Dojran and Prespa Lakes, also including other reservoirs.

In our 2024–2028 mandate period, we will develop a methodology to support regional waste management centres. We will support these regional centres to set up processing

centres that shall deal with secondary waste selection in an organized manner, obtain energy and materials from waste processing, generate biofuel, and reduce the amount of deposited waste.

○ SOCIAL CARE

Each citizen deserves the opportunity to live a dignified and fulfilling life, regardless of their age or social status. The social protection program's focus relates to three key areas: the fight against poverty through comprehensive economic and social policies; care for pensioners; and full inclusion of persons with disabilities. The Government will be fully committed to addressing these challenges and building a stronger and fairer social care system.

Family and disability pension beneficiaries have their pensions calculated only from the first-pillar state fund. Therefore, we will establish a fair formula for calculating these pensions such that insured persons are not harmed.

The Government will increase the financial compensation for the socially vulnerable, children and persons with disabilities, including an increase in the guaranteed minimum assistance, an increase in the special allowance, an increase in the financial assistance for quadriplegics, an increase in the financial assistance for the completely deaf, an increase in the right to salary compensation for part-time work of parents who care for a child or person with either physical or mental disability and the most severe chronic diseases.

In order to ensure a higher level of independent livelihood for people with impaired vision or hearing and their unhindered movement and fulfilment of their daily needs, we will implement a comprehensive plan for their support and assistance.

With the aim of improving the conditions faced by persons with physical disabilities while performing their daily duties, measures and activities shall be undertaken to build access ramps for persons with physical disabilities in all state administration bodies, local government units and other authorities and institutions. Persons with disabilities shall be supported in their purchase of special and adapted vehicles, assistive technology, and education materials, as well as employment in public institutions.

The Government will provide a program for the employment of children without parents and parental care after reaching 18 years of age.

○ **DEDICATED CARE FOR PENSIONERS**

We will increase pensions by 5,000 denars in the first year of our mandate. Instead of the previous solution of nine groups of minimum pensions, we will introduce a single amount of minimum pension. Thus, we will contribute to an improved and better-quality life of the most senior citizens.

We envisage building or providing space for at least five homes and eight daycare centres for the elderly, as required. In addition, the Government will provide both direct and indirect support for the opening of nursing homes. The Government will also work on opening new day care centres at multiple locations for children and people with disabilities, where the main activity shall be day care, psycho-social rehabilitation, and resocialization.

Amendments to the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance will enable those persons who lack up to 24 months of pensionable service to redeem it and exercise the right to an old-age pension in accordance with the requirement of a minimum of 15 years of pensionable service. Regarding any pensioners who have been in full-time employment up to the highest age limit for work, we will legally enable them to participate in the labour market without waving their right to a pension. In addition, young people who are family pension beneficiaries shall be able to be legally employed for up to six months within a year until they reach the age of 26, provided that they are full-time students or pupils.

V NATIONAL PRIORITIES

○ **FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES**

A key strategic goal of the future Government is for Macedonia to become a full-fledged member of the European Union. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia will be a responsible partner in international relations, a factor of stability in the region and beyond, and an active actor in global developments and the international scene relations-setting. In a symbiosis between internal and foreign policies, the Republic of Macedonia shall further build, and continuously upgrade, its role as a successful European democracy, which makes a positive contribution to both regional and world peace, stability, and sustainable development.

The Republic of Macedonia's foreign policy priorities shall be based on the principles of equality, mutual trust, solidarity, national unity-building on key state issues, dialogue, mutual respect, and reciprocity. Therefore, the Government will propose a new National

Foreign Policy Strategy. This Strategy shall promote the activities for the realization of Macedonian foreign policy priorities with the consensus of both political and social actors, thus ensuring implementation continuity thereof. The main goals of the Strategy shall be building a respectable country, defence of Macedonian national interests in multilateral organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs complete staffing and professional progress, as well as building a consistent foreign policy.

The Government will remain committed to the European and Euro-Atlantic security framework and the full alignment of the country's policy with the EU's common foreign, security and defence policy, while continuously contributing to the EU crisis management missions and NATO-led operations.

The Government will make every effort to achieve visible progress in the European integration process and full EU membership. We will build a consistent foreign policy strategy primarily based on state interest and with strong respect of the European values. The Government will especially advocate for the fastest possible utilization of the benefits of the European Common Market's potential in terms of free movement of people, goods, services, and capital.

The achievement of our strategic European Union membership goal must be on an equal and reciprocal basis, pursuant to measurable and objective criteria. Any attempt to open a discussion on either a bilateral or multilateral political level regarding the identity issues and specifics of the Macedonian people contests the Macedonian individuality and uniqueness.

The Government will strongly advocate for finding an appropriate solution in support of actual motion of the European integration process, without accepting the dictates of third countries. In order to find any viable solutions regarding the constitutional amendment issue, which has already been set as a condition for the start of negotiations with the EU, the Government will offer legal and legitimate possibilities and proposals in accordance with international law and principles. These proposals will create conditions for greater predictability of the European integration process, protected from unprincipled demands, so that it results in Macedonia's full membership in the EU. Ensuring predictability and certainty that no additional bilateral conditions shall be imposed during the negotiation process will make our integration path towards the EU more certain. In its future diplomatic engagement, the Government will make every effort to secure sufficient guarantees in support of the protection of the Macedonian centuries-old identity, the Macedonian language and distinctiveness, and to that end, it will request direct support from the European institutions, our neighbours, allies, and strategic partners.

The Government will promote cooperation within regional organizations, initiatives, and processes, while advancing European perspectives and developing relations based on the principles of mutual trust, increased economic and trade cooperation, continuous dialogue, and mutual respect. We will continue to proactively participate in all regional initiatives, but we will insist on their expansion by covering more countries from the region and reducing the areas where these initiatives overlap.

The full NATO membership is a key pillar for the long-term stability, security, and prosperity of Macedonia. As a NATO member country, we will continue our active contribution to security missions, including those of the EU and the UN. At the same time, we will continue our active participation in international operations that contribute to ensuring global peace and security. Through these activities, Macedonia will build itself as a trustful and reliable partner in solving complex international challenges such as illegal migration movements, the consequences of wars on European territory and beyond, global terrorist threats, hybrid wars and threats to human rights and democracy.

The Government will strengthen its strategic alliances, especially in politics, defence and cyber security, national security, migration, counterterrorism, economy, sustainable investment, energy, climate change, democratic development, anti-corruption, and other areas.

Economic diplomacy shall be one of the foreign policy priorities of the Republic of Macedonia, while promoting and protecting the country's economic interests, with the aim of our more successful integration into regional and global economic flows. The Government will strengthen the economic activities of Macedonian diplomatic and consular missions, especially in the area of attracting investors to Macedonia. A special focus will be given to attracting innovative, highly productive investments and those that will lead to a higher level of cooperation of foreign companies with the domestic industry and help in encouraging country's enhanced economic growth and economic development.

The obligation of the state is the continuous care for Macedonian minorities in neighbouring countries as per domestic positive legislation, while fully respecting the commitments contained in the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights.

The Government will open a new chapter of relations and policies towards the Macedonian Diaspora. Accelerated globalization, improved communications and traffic connections open a new chance for Macedonian Diaspora integration in the daily challenges, needs and opportunities of the country. Of exceptional importance is to enhance the Republic of Macedonia's presence wherever there is a Macedonian Diaspora, increase

communication and cooperation between the various organizations of Macedonians around the world. In that sense, a National Strategy for Cooperation with the Diaspora shall be developed. By improving the work of the entire network of diplomatic and consular missions, we will improve the quality and number of consular services for Macedonian citizens, such that they can effectively exercise their social and civil rights.

The Government will establish an Economic Diplomacy Council and a Science Diplomacy Council, with the aim of utilizing the overall potential of Macedonian expatriates. These Councils will aim at networking science potentials and guiding them towards any ideas and projects for improving the overall situation in the Republic of Macedonia, especially in the areas of education, technology and digitization, economy, and business.

Mechanisms for Diaspora engagement in diplomacy shall be formalized, enabling Macedonia to use the Diaspora expertise, networks, and resources. The care for Macedonians and Macedonian citizens living abroad and building strong connections with them are key priorities in the future Government's work.

The Government will provide an increased number of state scholarships for the best Macedonian students from both the Diaspora and neighbourhood. These scholarships shall be intended for undergraduate and postgraduate studies at state universities.

The Government will make a plan for the establishment of new cultural and information centres in the neighbourhood, across major centres in Europe and the world, for the purpose of strengthening and promoting Macedonian art, culture, and specifics.

We will proceed with the revision of the Republic of Macedonia's diplomatic and consular network and adjust it to the requirements and resources available to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our needs in terms of meeting the goals and priorities set within the new Foreign Policy Strategy.

In the context of adequate country representation, the diplomatic capacities of the state shall be strengthened, the quality of diplomatic and consular missions (DCMs) shall be improved in terms of countries' non-resident coverage by our existing embassies or our ambassadors abroad, non-resident coverage of certain countries by ambassadors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, in parallel, the human, material and technical capacities in our DCMs abroad will be strengthened. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade will strive to increase the level of diplomatic processes' digitization and the provision of most consular services, making them much more accessible to their users, by applying and more effectively using modern technology benefits, which will also create conditions for improving the overall process of management, activity, engagement, accountability and efficiency of our diplomatic and consular network and diplomacy in general.

In connection with the country's accession negotiations with the European Union, efforts will be made to intensify cooperation between Macedonia's institutions and the European Union's institutions, enhance European funds' utilization by Macedonian institutions and entities, strengthen capacities of state institutions and other stakeholders in order to be prepared to take on all the EU membership obligations and support domestic economy to take part in European economic flows.

During this mandate, the structure for negotiations between Macedonia and the European Union will be significantly improved, taking into account the new European Union's Growth Plan. This process shall include strengthening and upgrading human resources and restructuring of negotiation processes, as well as the involvement of best Macedonian universities' professors and experts in the negotiation process. The translation and interpretation capacities for the Macedonian language shall also be strengthened, with the aim of timely and quality preparation of the EU acquis national version and provision of quality support during accession negotiations. We will apply rapid reform dynamics, which will move in parallel with negotiations, however independently thereof. We will be guided by European practices in reforming the judiciary, tackling corruption, building sustainable economic growth and structural social reforms.

The Training Centre within the Secretariat for European Affairs will be expanded and transformed into an EU Academy. The EU Academy shall aim to continuously monitor and strengthen the capacities in the accession process for better utilization of European funds and exchange of good practices and know-how with the EU Training Centres of candidate countries and EU Member States.

The Government shall make efforts to speed up bilateral activities to open multiple border crossings (BCs), including:

- Berovo – Sandanski BC.
- Markova Noga (Prespa) BC.
- Pulevac Kavadarci – Voden BC.
- Strezimir – Restelica BC.
- Djepishte – Trebishte BC.

○ SECURITY AND DEFENCE

A strong and well-coordinated national security system is the basis of a stable and prosperous Macedonia. Such system includes internal security, defence under highest standards, civil protection, and international cooperation. The Government's program sets

the safety and security of Macedonian citizens as a top priority. The Government's priorities in this sense include:

- Measures to encourage transparency in the operation of security institutions, while ensuring public oversight and accountability.
- Continuous training and professional development programs for staff across all security institutions, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to deal with modern security threats.
- Improvement of working conditions to attract and retain the best quality staff, while building a professional, quality, and dignified service.
- Building a sustainable and integrated security system.

Building an effective national security system does not exist by itself, and that is why we recognize the importance of strong international partnerships for effective dealing with transnational threats and strengthening regional stability. In this sense, we will deepen our cooperation with NATO and the EU, including both bilateral and regional cooperation, while building partnerships for a joint response to key security issues and contributing to collective defence efforts.

We envisage the development of strategies for community-oriented policing, with the aim of strengthening trust and cooperation between the police and citizens. Through a proactive and shared approach between the police and the community, we will work to solve any local security issues, reduce crime, and build a safe living environment. The Government will promote the Safe City System. In this way, citizens' security will be raised. We will have CCTVs installed at multiple locations, especially in big cities, at key road corridors and border crossings.

Inter-institutional cooperation shall be strengthened and promoted among all stakeholders whose focus is the fight against and detection of terrorism at the national, regional, and international levels.

Observance of the country's territorial sovereignty, integrity, individuality, autonomy, and independence is of utmost importance. We will systematically fight against the denial of the right to exist of the Macedonian people, their language, culture, and identity.

Through systematic measures and activities, the security system shall be upgraded such that it has the capacity to oppose all forms of organized crime and corruption, including within its own ranks. Efforts will be made to reduce and suppress corruption among persons with police and other official powers by strengthening the control mechanisms in the Ministry of Interior, the Customs Administration, the Financial Police, the Prison and Forest Police, with the aim of conducting investigations against persons with police powers. The capacities for cooperation and joint action with the Public Prosecutor's

Office for Prosecuting Organized Crime and Corruption shall be improved. In this sense, the establishment of a coordinating body to combat organized crime and corruption is foreseen, which shall include: the Ministries of Interior and Finance, the Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, the Customs Administration, the Public Revenue Office, the Financial Police Office, and the Financial Intelligence Office.

In collaboration with domestic experts and civil society, with the aim of achieving broad citizen and expert support, it is planned to merge the Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency into a single modern security intelligence service. This Agency shall be managed by senior professionals selected under strictly determined criteria according to the EU and NATO standards. For the proper operation of this Agency, we envisage the construction of a completely new building for that purpose, based on strict NATO security standards, outside the Ministry of Interior.

The Ministry of Interior's staffing shall be enhanced to handle cyber-crime and frequent attacks and frauds that citizens are exposed to on the Internet. Ongoing expert education of judicial and law enforcement authorities in the field of cyber-security, cyber-crime and electronic evidence is also foreseen.

We envisage reforming the Public Security Bureau with the aim of increasing policing efficiency and bringing the police closer to citizens. Through a systemic digitization of all processes at the Ministry of Interior, we will introduce digitized document management procedures, e-case management, and crypto communication connection of national security entities. The same reform shall also be carried out within the administrative services in terms of increasing their efficiency in the issuance of personal documents. In order to eliminate problems such as waiting too long for an appointment, abuse of influence to favour citizens by getting appointments out of line and waiting in crowds, a functional system shall be established, which will be connected to the Ministry of Interior's electronic system for issuance of personal documents. An electronic system shall be introduced for the submission and tracking of requests for obtaining licenses to carry and use firearms.

We will introduce efficient and integrated advanced systems for state border online surveillance and control, then, technical border security through the installation of sensors and cameras, frequent mixed patrols with the neighbouring countries' border police, full coverage of all risk points through accurate mapping, as well as create an efficient national migration control system.

Continuous reconstruction and renewal of police stations and other police facilities is foreseen in order to provide modern working conditions for police officers, including modernized work uniforms for the police force.

The Training Centre will be reorganized, which shall enable the continuous upgrading of the knowledge and skills of security structure members. Contemporary programs and

specialist trainings in the area of security, intelligence, defence, and civil protection shall be introduced. Reconstruction of the existing accommodation and administrative facilities shall be performed, including the reconstruction and construction of classrooms and a new amphitheatre, construction of indoor and outdoor shooting ranges, reconstruction and construction of new sports facilities, and facilities for simulations and drills. Cooperation shall be established with higher education institutions in the area of security and other higher education institutions as per state institutions' needs, thus allowing for offering the best students employment with the Ministry of Interior and in security services. It is also planned to upgrade the existing system for recording and monitoring the level of training among all police officers, as well as to improve the organizational structure of the Ministry of Interior and PSB's units responsible for training.

By amending the employment procedure, persons who have completed any voluntary military service shall receive additional score points during their employment process at the Ministry of Interior, the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, security structures, protection and rescue services, fire departments and other related services.

The forest police sector shall be transformed and transferred to the Ministry of Interior for the purpose of prevention and detection of perpetrators of crimes against the environment and nature.

We will establish objective, transparent, clear, and strict criteria for employment in the Army, based on expertise, quality and according to the needs of the workplace. We will ensure quality professional development of both officers and non-commissioned officers in the ARM. We will establish transparent and clear criteria for the selection and referral of employees to professional training, diplomatic missions abroad and peacekeeping missions, based on expertise, merit and fulfilment of international and NATO standards.

Our priority is to solve the housing issue of army employees by a home-building program for army personnel, and to provide possibilities to get one's own house or apartment within the existing programs of the state. The Government will work to improve the living standards of employees and their families during their annual vacations and exercise of recreational activities that are part of the plans of the units and specialists of particular importance for the defence. We will create conditions for enabling quality support in the process of preparation for professional soldiers' return to civilian life by connecting such soldiers with other state institutions that need prepared and security-educated personnel.

We will create opportunities for creative use of Army's capacities in peacetime circumstances in order to utilize the resources invested in the defence sector for Macedonian citizens' civil protection.

We will develop a multi-year investment plan to improve Army's working conditions through the reconstruction and renovation of army barracks. We will equip the Macedonian Army with the required infantry weapons, means of transport, communication systems, protective equipment, and development, and we will modernize the communication and information systems, with the aim of an efficient, modern, and digitized army.

Strengthening the role of women is one of the fundamental principles of democracy. Adequate representation of women in the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence and other institutions from the intelligence and security sector shall ensure true respect for the principles of gender equality.

We will open a broad expert discussion and public hearing on the need for the operationalization of civil protection and crisis management systems, with the aim of optimal utilization of such systems and increasing the efficiency and cohesion of the various actors in their functioning.

We will dedicate ourselves to improving the standard of living and working conditions of firefighting units' employees. In cooperation with local government units, we will develop a multi-year plan for investments in firefighting vehicles and equipment for enhanced efficiency and working conditions of firefighting units. The development of voluntary firefighting is one of the priorities, exclusively following the example of European countries.

National units of territorial fire protection shall also establish specialist units for mountain-climbing interventions, search and rescue from rubble and avalanches, interventions on water and under water, interventions for protection from dangerous animals, and they shall be in coordination with other institutions with similar competences.

○ **CULTURE – PILLAR OF THE COUNTRY**

As a main mark of identity and development, culture, with all its institutional mechanisms, protects Macedonian national interests and puts them in support of promoting the community. Culture is also an integrating factor of society, the people, and the state. The main culture program goals include:

- Reinststate national culture as a primary pillar of society, for the purpose of cultural heritage protection, promotion and affirmation of the national identity and the multifaceted cultural, material, and spiritual values of Macedonia.
- Care and protection of the Macedonian language.
- Reform the financing system and provide additional funds to support culture.
- Encourage quality and freedom in artistic creation.

- Strengthen staff capacity in culture institutions at all levels, take care of dignified valuation of efforts and status of artists and cultural workers.
- Create adequate cultural and culture-educational programs for the development and education of children and youth for the purpose of encouraging their creativity.
- Encourage cooperation between the public and private sectors, civil society, and local communities for the collective culture development promotion.
- Complete digitization of institutions in the area of culture, artistic creativity, and cultural heritage.
- Make policies on societal, social, and cultural inclusion of marginalized persons and persons with disabilities.
- Greater visibility and recognition of Macedonian culture in international contexts.

Nurturing the Macedonian language as a national identity attribute is one of the Government's priorities. For this purpose, scientific projects shall be financed and activities for its proper use shall be implemented. Particular attention shall be paid to learning the Macedonian language as a common language of understanding in the country and strengthening social cohesion. In collaboration with domestic universities, local communities, and the private sector, we are planning to organize international summer schools and camps. The Government shall: work on consolidating the position of the Macedonian language at the global level; promote its use and learning in the countries where Macedonian citizens and diaspora members live and reside; sustain the existing instructorships and open new ones, including Macedonian language courses at universities abroad; and make efforts to enhance scientific cooperation in the area of culture.

A priority for the Government is to preserve and reinforce the cultural identity of the Macedonian people and other ethnic communities. Financial support for folklore ensembles in cities throughout Macedonia shall be increased for the operation thereof, then, also for fixed asset provision, nurture, production and reproduction of original songs and dances from Macedonia, including old urban traditional folk music and instruments.

Efforts will be made to ensure the most up-to-date spatial conditions for the National Institution "Tanec (Dance)" as the first national professional folklore ensemble in Macedonia. We will continuously support the further staffing and education of both the ensemble and its orchestra.

A National Commission will be set up with the aim of establishing geographical name standards. This Commission shall develop a program for the protection of Macedonian geographical names and product trademarks.

Continuous support for nurturing the spoken and written forms of ethnic communities' languages in artistic creation in Macedonia will be enabled, as well as the continuous promotion of the rich cultural diversity, interculturalism and cultural identity specifics.

The protection of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage shall be ensured through:

- Continuous cultural heritage valorisation and revaluation.
- Archaeological research, conservation, and restoration of profane and sacral architecture in urban complexes and city cores, as per the level of threat thereto.
- Protection and restoration of movable property.
- Continuous identification, valorisation, and registration of intangible assets in the National Cultural Heritage Register.
- New Central Conservation Laboratory for movable and immovable cultural heritage.
- Inscription of cultural assets in the World Heritage List and other UNESCO cultural heritage lists; and
- Making policies and developing programs for cultural heritage promotion and popularization.

We foresee enhanced support and incentives for contemporary musical and musical-scenic, dramatic, artistic, film and literary creativity. We will stimulate artistic creativity by opening competitions for the purchase of best artistic works in the area of music, drama, film, fine arts, and literature-publication activities. We will increase the funds for the production of new Macedonian films and feature series in the Macedonian language.

A program shall be developed for the continuous dispersion of culture at the regional and local level with the aim of enriching municipalities' cultural life and allowing for greater cultural participation of the local population.

We will significantly increase support for Macedonian language music, film and television productions for children and youth.

The promotion of the status of artists and their work, including all cultural workers shall be our focus. We will pay particular attention to improving their conditions for creation and work.

The Government will work to recognize and stimulate the economic, productive, and profitable dimensions of creative and cultural industries through the National Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) Council and support the creation of recognizable Macedonian brands.

2025–2034 CULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE BUILDING:

- Provision of state-of-the-art spatial conditions for National Institution “TANEC.”
- Completion of the Plaoshnik complex in Ohrid, the Universal Hall in Skopje, as well as the theatres in Strumica and Tetovo and the building of the Turkish Theatre in Skopje.
- Reconstruction of the facilities of the Culture Centres in Bitola, Shtip and Kumanovo.
- Reconstruction with upgrading and extension of the facilities of the Culture Centre “Marko Cepenkov” – Prilep and the Culture Centre “Grigor Prlichev” – Ohrid, with the aim of providing new facilities intended for the Theatre “Vojdan Chernodrinski” – Prilep and the National Theatre “Grigor Prlichev” – Ohrid.
- Revitalization of the Monument of Culture “Havzipashini konaci (Havzi pasha’s lodgings)” and the use thereof for cultural, educational and tourist purposes.
- Reconstruction of the Museum of Macedonia’s museum complex.
- Reconstruction and rehabilitation of the administrative space and artists’ rehearsal rooms of the Macedonian Opera and Ballet and procurement of new rehearsal instruments.
- Design and construction of modern facilities for the Drama Theatre, the Comedy Theater and the Theatre for Children and Youth.
- Preparation of project documentation for the construction of a new modern building of the National Gallery of Macedonia.
- Reconstruction of the National and University Library “Sveti Kliment Ohridski (St. Clement of Ohrid)” – Skopje.

○ DEVELOPED TOURISM

The Government’s main goal in the development of tourism is a continuous increase in the number of tourists by building new tourism-development models, creating new forms of tourism, branding products, strengthening human resources in the hospitality and tourism sector, and promoting Macedonia as an attractive tourist destination with rich tourist content.

Macedonia possesses both natural and cultural potentials for the development of selective types of tourism, including authenticity, ambience, autochthonous food and specialties, unique crafts, and authentic cultural events. At the same time, tourism development must include the most important aspects of the global Sustainable Development Goals.

In cooperation with faculties/colleges specialized in the area of tourism and the professional community in Macedonia, we will proceed with drafting a National Tourism

Development Strategy, which shall contain concrete action plans, including a new model of state support for tourism and objective criteria for the categorization of all tourist facilities.

In order to introduce the uniform application of laws in tourism and avoid any overlaps of different inspections' competences, a central body will be introduced that shall have a preventive, controlling and supervisory role in tourism.

As part of the country's project for complete digital transformation, we will reduce administrative procedures in tourism as well. Tourists shall be registered electronically through an interconnected Accommodation Facilities – Ministry of Interior – Municipalities System with the aim of realistic tracking the number of tourists, the place where they are staying, the length of their stay, etc.

The Government will work on the development of tourism infrastructure, structured development of products with greater added value and development of special forms of tourism, with the aim of creating conditions for a more balanced and sustainable tourism development. To that end, we will promote urban tourism, rural tourism, ethno-tourism, winter tourism, mountain tourism, lake tourism, transit tourism, hunting tourism, spa tourism, camping tourism and adventure tourism.

By across-the-board infrastructure investments, Ohrid will be positioned on the map of world conference tourism centres (MICE) for the organization of international conferences and business events.

The Government will start the second phase of the Vodno Cable Car project implementation, starting from the forest park foot.

In order to achieve 365-days-a-year tourism, we will initiate talks with Albania and Greece for the establishment of a shared tourist zone between the three countries in the areas of Ohrid, Prespa and Kostur Lakes and the existing and possibly new ski centres.

The Government will develop a comprehensive program for the promotion of domestic tourist and hospitality facilities for Macedonian citizens, as well as the activation of youth trips and retiree trips in order to increase the number of visits to domestic tourist sites.

The organization of an International Tourism Fair promoting Macedonia's overall tourist potential shall be supported. We will encourage participation in international tourism fairs.

The Government will work to improve vocational education in tourism via practical work at secondary schools, cooperation with companies from the industry, modernization, and improvement of curricula quality. In order to raise interest in specific scientific

branches, as well as to enrich the know-how of professionals dealing in tourism, we will encourage the creation of a specialist study group for work in culture for tourism purposes.

○ **SPORTS: NATIONAL PRIDE**

The Government will invest heavily in sports infrastructure for top achievements and encourage the involvement of children and youth in continuous sports engagements. The Government will develop a long-term National Sports Strategy in order to clearly identify the situation in sports and issues currently faced by athletes and sports entities in the country. These comprehensive measures and activities shall bring new achievements in Macedonian sport. Our four-year-term goals include:

- Opportunity for every child to play sports.
- Our national teams shall consistently take part in international sports competitions.
- Sports infrastructure shall be modernized and accessible.
- Culture of sportsmanship and fair play shall be fostered.

The Government will propose a new Law on Sports, which will aim to clearly define the rights and obligations of sports entities, their method of financing, jurisdiction over sports facilities, awards and recognitions, school, and university sports, including the supervision of the work of organizations in the area of sports. Increased financial support, according to clear criteria, shall be provided to sports federations, clubs, athletes, and professional teams.

We will make it possible for all athletes who can prove that they were professional athletes in the past, under certain conditions, to redeem their years of service in order to exercise their right to a pension. At the same time, a program shall be developed for the employment of successful individual athletes in the public sector (the army, the police, or other institutions) to ensure stable employment during and after the completion of their sports careers. For that purpose, retraining and upskilling of former athletes shall be planned.

The Government will provide adequate conditions for physical education in every primary and secondary school, thus contributing to better psychophysical development of children. Additionally, through sports club support programs, as many children as possible shall be encouraged to take active participation in professional sports activities. For the first time, the Government will valorise the results achieved by students in school sports at official international championships and the results achieved by university students at international sports championships.

The Government will start the construction and reconstruction of sports infrastructure, which will allow athletes to train and compete in state-of-the-art conditions. The Government shall pay particular attention to the following:

- Construction of a National Sports Centre in Skopje.
- Multi-purpose sports complex in Bitola.
- Completion and commissioning of the swimming pool in Ohrid.
- Reconstruction of halls and energy-efficient rehabilitation of sports halls where top sports are played.
- An infrastructure plan and a multi-year strategy for the construction of sports facilities in those cities where a shortage thereof is identified.
- Modernization of multiple football/soccer stadiums throughout the country.
- A plan for annual investments in outdoor sports fields; and
- Signage and marking of the busiest hiking trails.

By a comprehensive program to enable maximum accessibility of sports for all, ramps will be installed to facilitate access to sports facilities for all persons with disabilities, including a multipurpose hall for persons with disabilities, as well as additional support for those sports clubs that will also include persons with disabilities in their work.

VI RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

○ INTER-ETHNIC COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Government will pay special attention to the development and promotion of relations between communities in Macedonia. In the spirit of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, in order to realize the highest priorities for ethnic, cultural, and civil rights outlined in the Constitution, we will work on the development of multicultural cohesion and support the multicultural values that represent the wealth of the colourful ethnic communities in the Macedonian state. This will be our priority to which we will dedicate ourselves and through which we will provide for addressing positive discrimination that shall enable equal opportunities for all ethnic communities in Macedonia.

○ THE WOMAN AT THE CENTER OF MACEDONIAN SOCIETY

Equality of women and men is a fundamental human right, an essential element of democracy and imperative for social justice. The Government will be strongly focused on strengthening the position of women in every segment of social action, as a necessary basis for prosperity and sustainability, because strong women mean a strong society.

The Government shall be guided by the principle of zero tolerance for the different forms of violence to which women are exposed. In this regard, we will actively support measures for the protection of women victims of violence, we will strive to improve access to specialized support services for all women and their children, and also to increase the number and improve the quality of support services.

Affordable and efficient preventive health care shall be provided to prevent malignant diseases in women, then, rights of access to adequate health services that will enable women to have a safe pregnancy and childbirth and give couples the opportunity to have a healthy newborn. In particular, we will stand for access to quality health care, especially among socially vulnerable population groups regarding HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, then, abortion, infertility, and breast and uterus malignant diseases.

Ten new care and support centres for women victims of gender-based violence will be opened. A Government Interdepartmental Group shall work to protect women from all forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence victims by strengthening legislation, including stronger and regular coordination of national and local institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as through consistent implementation of the signed international treaties, conventions and resolutions on human rights and protection from violence against women. This Group shall work on measures to fully include in the educational process those young girls who are not yet part thereof.

Through social dialogue, efforts will be made to reduce the gender wage gap between men and women by establishing a gender-neutral plan for the classification of occupations dominated by female workers.

Institutions shall develop plans and programs within the Employment Service Agency's activities for: greater labour market inclusion of both urban and rural women; preparation of annual female entrepreneurship programs and continuous increase of budgets for this purpose on an annual level.

○ YOUTH IN THE FOCUS

The Government will be strongly committed to creating a society where young people can thrive. The Government's goals are to create the conditions required for young people from Macedonia to build their future at home, get empowered through education and skills development, be encouraged to youth participation in decision-making processes and promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation.

The priority of the new Government is to ensure secure and well-paid jobs for young people in Macedonia. By creating a better business climate, higher-added-value jobs available to young people will be created. For easier involvement of young people in the labour market, secondary and higher education curricula shall be improved, and trainings for upskilling and new skills acquisition shall be envisaged to improve young people's employability through the Employment Service Agency's various programs.

With regard to encouraging young people's employability and employment, the following is foreseen:

- A program for 500 university students with the highest academic achievement in their undergraduate studies at public universities: each year, such students shall receive job offers in either the private or public sector.
- Legislative changes to create the possibility for each university student to work part-time without losing the status of a full-time student.
- Up to 5,000 one-year trainings for advanced digital skills in line with domestic ICT companies' needs.
- Co-financing for international certification of young ICT professionals in order to increase workers' productivity.
- Financial resources for young people's entrepreneurial initiatives as a comprehensive program to support youth employment.
- Co-financing of trainings through a voucher system, at well-known online education platforms for talented students.
- Public institutions shall be open for volunteering and internships.
- Increased initial financial support for young people who will start farming.
- Advisory services for young people who will start a business in the field of legislation, finance and taxes, administrative work, IT tools, marketing and other relevant support programs when starting one's own business.

The Government will support the establishment of digital innovation hubs and youth innovation centres with educational and technical resources and workspace. Free internet access will be provided in all student dormitories, libraries, reading rooms, youth centres and faculties/colleges.

The Government will work on a thorough renovation of all boarding schools and student dormitories in the country, thus enabling the improvement of overall residence conditions and raising students' standard.

Funds earmarked for scholarships of university and high-school students will be increased, and corruption will be disabled by digitizing the application process thereof. Regarding scarce and high-paid professions, full study scholarships shall be provided,

studies copayment shall be reduced for all up-to-25-year-old students who are parents, and scholarships shall be provided to any students achieving results in either a world Olympiad, international, or state competitions in various subject areas.

○ **GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Government's transparency shall be a top priority in Government's operation. The transparency's preventive role in the work of institutions is one of the mechanisms to improve their work, both in terms of increasing their efficiency and reducing the possibilities of any form of abuse and corruption therein.

Government institutions will join the shared web service in order to improve their communication with citizens. A standard of minimum information required to be published and updated by each state institution on its web platform shall be developed. The goal is that citizens shall be able to receive all the information about institutions' work at any time, in an effortless way.

The amount of open data in computer-processable format shall be increased. Open data shall be regularly updated and free to use, reuse and redistribute without any restrictions. Engagement within the Open Government Partnership and portals for publication of regulations and data shall be intensified.

In cooperation with the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption and the State Audit Office, while using the best European practices, an assessment of risk factors for abuses and corruption in state institutions shall be made. Based on such assessment, a plan shall be drawn up for the publication of institutions' information as an adequate prevention against corruption and abuses.

By legislative amendments, full accessibility of state institutions' websites to persons with disabilities shall be enabled, as per the recommendations of associations for the protection of persons with disabilities.

○ **FREE AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

The Government's goal is to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions in media space, including Internet portals, via clear media policies that shall be prepared, elaborated, and supported by relevant institutions and independent associations of the media, media workers and journalists. It is necessary to support the sustainability of independent and professional public media services by further developing transparent and equal market conditions for all private and public actors.

The Government's goals in this area will be as follows:

- Development of audio and audiovisual media services.
- Online media development.
- Freedom-of-expression promotion.
- Media literacy development.
- Development of independent audio, visual and Internet production.
- Encouraging, promoting, and protecting the cultural identity, language and tradition of the Macedonian people and communities in the Republic of Macedonia, while respecting cultural and religious differences, encouraging the culture of public dialogue between citizens in order to strengthen mutual understanding and tolerance for the purpose of improving the relations between different communities.
- Encouraging creativity, educational and scientific development.
- Protection of the interests of users, especially minors.
- Technical and technological development of audio and audiovisual media services, online media, convergence with electronic communications and information society services.
- Effective fight against disinformation and fake news in the media and cyberspace.

Bearing in mind that further reform of the public broadcasting service is required to further strengthen its independence, professional standards and financial sustainability, the Government will support an inclusive discussion towards this type of reform.

We will support the introduction of effective self-regulatory and co-regulatory mechanisms, combined with the establishment of regular media pluralism assessments. We will open a debate with all interested parties on changes to legal provisions in order to ensure competitiveness, sustainability and pluralism in the media market, then, improvement of journalists' social and economic status, legal certainty, equality and non-discrimination, while promoting media pluralism and sustainability and encouraging media development, with harmonization of our legal framework related to the public broadcasting service with the European standards.

○ **SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY**

Continuous capacity building and professional upgrading of non-governmental organizations is required for a dynamic and inclusive society that shall be a reflection of civil needs and interests. Freedom and independence in NGO action shall be primary imperative, since in such way it will be possible for civil society organizations to take their rightful place in society.

The Government will build its relations with civil society organizations based on the following principles:

- Inclusiveness and participatory planning – civil society shall be consulted and included in policymaking related to country's development.
- Security and responsibility – legal security and reform of laws relating to civil society organizations.
- Openness and transparency – openness and transparency are necessary instruments for building equality before the law and accountability of decision makers.

Our vision is to support an inclusive, independent, and professional civil society that is institutions' partner in the creation and realization of country's strategic goals.

The Government will provide budget funds to support civil society organizations with the aim of civil society's quality development. The Guarantee Fund's purpose shall be financial support to civil society organizations that apply for and win projects under the EU and other funds, such as the IPA funds, Horizon Europe, Climate Kick, InvestEU, Digital Europe etc., which also require CSOs' share or co-financing.

Through the introduction of digital tools in the operation and cooperation with the NGO sector, the portal for civil society cooperation will be put into operation, which shall serve as an online resource centre. A comprehensive reform of the system for sponsorships to organizations performing public activities shall be implemented, which will mean strengthened civil society organizations, and also consistent, open, and transparent mechanisms for awarding donations and sponsorships.

The Government will work on the development of social entrepreneurship that contributes to social cohesion, regional and rural development, environmental protection, protection of consumers, agriculture, and social security.

The Government will organize an Annual Conference of civil society organizations for the purpose of presenting their work, including mutual activities and cooperation with government institutions in the form of a Civil Society Fair.