

2026

Program of ACTIVITIES



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HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



Executive Summary

This document presents the program of activities of Finance Think - Economic Research & Policy Institute for the calendar year 2026. The plan is structured around four pillars of Institute's work:

- 1) research;
- 2) analytics;
- 3) advocacy and communication;
- 4) capacity building and networking.

Research

Establishment of a Platform for Dialogue and Transparency of State Aid Policy in the Western Balkans - 6

The main goal of this project is to increase access to state aid data, deepen the regional integration and compliance of state aid policies with EU standards through enhanced transparency and stakeholder collaboration.

To address these challenges, the project will focus on the following specific objectives:

- Developing a comprehensive web platform to facilitate open dialogue and access to state aid data and evidence information.
- Building consensus among stakeholders on strategic directions for state aid policy and practice (deepening the engagement with stakeholders that was successfully initiated in the previous phase)
- Advocating for improved state aid governance through a regularly updated database, targeted briefings, and public engagement.

Citizen Oversight: Bridging the gap between policy promises and delivery in four development areas

The project is aimed at encouraging participatory and responsible democracy in the development sectors (education, health, social and economy) of North Macedonia, where the voice of citizens is heard, priorities are transparently set and political promises are constantly translated into tangible reality, ensuring a sustainable socio – economic progress and inclusive growth.

The general goal of the project is to promote deliberative democracy in reforms in key development areas with a focus on youth and women, through the engagement of various stakeholders in the process of prioritizing reforms and encouraging political accountability through monitoring the fulfillment of political promises.

Specific objectives include:

- To identify to what extent policy-defined priorities are in accordance with citizens' priorities
- To create evidence of gaps between political promises and needs, and gaps in the realization of political promises
- To encourage political responsibility and strengthen citizens' awareness, by monitoring the implementation of political promises using the Economic Compass as a digital tool



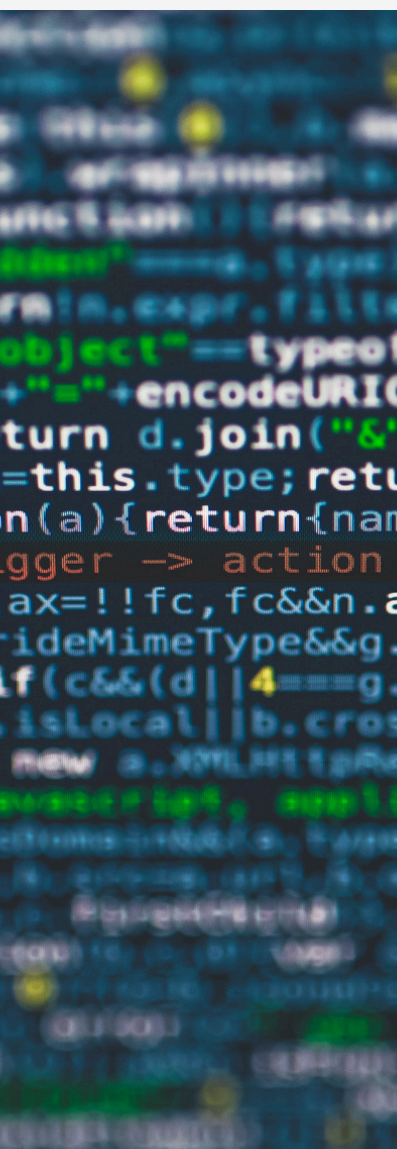
Mapping of the Labor Market Needs of North Macedonia's Leading Companies

The core objective is to determine current and emerging skills needs, identify the most acute labour shortages, assess mismatches between employer demand and education/training supply, and explore opportunities to attract or collaborate with diaspora talent.

Open Contracts, Honest Communities: Tracking Local Procurement for Integrity

The general objective of the project is to enhance transparency, accountability, and political integrity in public procurement at the municipal level in North Macedonia, thereby reducing corruption risks and strengthening democratic governance. Specific objectives include:

- Assess procurement practices in the municipalities of Prilep and Krushevo through a standardized transparency scorecard, identifying strengths and risks.
- Build capacity of at least 15 local stakeholders (citizens, CSOs, journalists) through targeted trainings on monitoring procurement and promoting integrity.
- Raise public awareness by simplifying complex procurement issues and engaging communities in oversight via campaigns and outreach.
- Foster dialogue between citizens, civil society, and local authorities through publication of municipal scorecards, a comparative policy brief, and a final public event.



Fostering Critical Debate in Evidence-based Budgetary Processes and Fiscal Transparency

The project aims to contribute to the International Budget Partnership's (IBP) objectives by fostering transparency in the country. This overarching aim is broken down into specific objectives involving concrete interventions on two fronts:

- To advance data-driven policymaking.
- To increase municipal transparency and strengthen citizen engagement, by making publicly available and updating 3-digit Budget data for all 80 municipalities in North Macedonia.

Regional Capacity Building for Transparency and EU Alignment in State Aid Practices in the Western Balkans

The objective of the action is to strengthen regional cooperation, transparency, and EU alignment of state aid practices in the Western Balkans through targeted capacity-building, stakeholder engagement, and evidence-informed dialogue. Specific objectives include:

- Enhance institutional knowledge and regional cooperation by delivering a series of workshops and webinars that bring together state aid authorities, competition commissions, and expert institutions from all six Western Balkan economies.
- Build a shared understanding and consensus on key state aid reform priorities through joint discussions, selection of critical thematic areas, and collaborative development of methodology for short regional position briefs and a roadmap for improved transparency and EU acquis alignment.
- Increase public and institutional awareness of transparent state aid governance through visibility activities, tailored communication materials, and promotion of regional cooperation outcomes across media and stakeholder networks.
- Strengthen the role of the WEBECON Network in regional monitoring and dialogue on state aid by actively involving WEBECON members in data validation, facilitation of stakeholder engagement, and joint reflection on state aid practices, thereby enhancing

Feasibility Study of Blended Financing Models

The project is developing practical and sustainable blended financing options for ensuring the long-term operation of SRHR content integrated within the EduIno platform. The objective of the assignment is to design two to three concrete financing models and validate them through consultations with relevant public, private, and development stakeholders. The focus will be on leveraging multiple funding sources to cover ongoing maintenance, updates of SRHR digital materials, and future platform improvements, while ensuring strong institutional ownership and alignment with national policy frameworks.

Economic Reformometer: Monitoring Four Pillars of the EU Reform Agenda

The project aims to provide independent and analytical monitoring of the Government's progress in implementing economic reforms, in line with the EU Reform Agenda Program. The focus is on:

1. Public financial management – monitoring the implementation of the Organic Budget Law,
2. Formalization of the informal economy,
3. State aid and its transparency,
4. Development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – through rationalization of parafiscal charges.

Through the development and tracking of indicators, combined with quantitative and qualitative analysis and visual presentation of findings, the project will deliver regular monitoring reports and policy recommendations. Ultimately, the goal is to strengthen transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the management of public economic policies, aligned with the country's EU integration priorities.

Bridging Local Voices and National Action in Just Energy Transition

The objective of the project is to empower communities and decision-makers in the Western Balkans to embrace Green Industrial Policies as a pathway toward sustainable economic development and a just energy transition, by bridging local concerns with national policy-making and regional cooperation.

The project's specific objectives can be defined as:

- Enhance community engagement – Organize local discussions and events in pollution-affected or economically vulnerable areas to raise awareness and gather input on the green transition and industrial policies.
- Foster policy dialogue at the national level – Convene a high-level roundtable with government, civil society, industry, and academia to strengthen national consensus and policy direction on Green Industrial Policies.
- Promote public awareness and outreach – Publish an op-ed in national media and disseminate user-friendly infographics through social media to make the benefits of Green Industrial Policies accessible to the wider public.



Gender Gap Analysis in North Macedonia

The general objective of the project is to produce a comprehensive and empirically grounded analysis of the gender pay gap in North Macedonia, which will provide precise and applicable policy recommendations, in line with ILO Convention No. 100 and the UN gender equality agenda.

Specific Objectives

- To calculate raw, adjusted, and factor-weighted gender pay gaps using micro-data from the Structure of Earnings Survey (SES).
- To conduct quantile decomposition analysis in order to identify differences across the wage distribution (glass ceiling, sticky floor).
- To analyze within-firm and between-firm pay gaps, in order to determine whether inequality stems from pay-setting practices or from sectoral segregation.
- To estimate the so-called “feminization penalty” and examine how the concentration of women in specific occupations/sectors affects wage levels.
- To conduct consultations with stakeholders (trade unions, employers, institutions) and integrate their perspectives into the final recommendations.
- To provide practical and context-specific policy recommendations for reducing the gender pay gap.

Table presenting stages and deadlines

| Activity | Stage | Planned tasks | Deadline |
|--|--|---|---------------|
| Establishment of a Platform for Dialogue and Transparency of State Aid Policy in the Western Balkans - 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting data on state aid Developing web platform | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing regional workshop on state aid policy Organizing an online webinar on state aid registry Preparing position briefs | April 2026 |
| Citizen oversight: Bridging the gap between policy promises and delivery in four development areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting qualitative data through surveys and focus groups Generating evidence on the fulfillment of the political promises | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing promotional campaign to share the findings Organizing public events to steer debate on the topic | December 2026 |
| Mapping of the Labor Market Needs of North Macedonia's Leading Companies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the labor market indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting qualitative data through surveys and focus groups Prepaing policy study | July 2026 |
| Open Contracts, Honest Communities: Tracking Local Procurement for Integrity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of 10 local produrements Organization of a capacity-building event | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing policy brief and visual products Organizing final event to present project findinf | March 2026 |
| Regional Capacity Building for Transparency and EU Alignment in State Aid Practices in the Western Balkans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation for regional 2-day workshop on state aid transparency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing regional workshop on state aid policy Organizing an online webinar on state aid registry | December 2026 |

Table presenting stages and deadlines (2)

| Activity | Stage | Planned tasks | Deadline |
|---|--|--|-----------------|
| Fostering critical debate in evidence-based budgetary processes and fiscal transparency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting data on local budgets • Preparing policy briefs • Preparing visual products | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing policy briefs • Preparing visual products | October 2026 |
| Feasibility Study of Blended Financing Models | Not started yet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting data • Preparing policy brief | August 2026 |
| Economic Reformometer: Monitoring Four Pillars of the EU Reform Agenda | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting data • Developing indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative and qualitative analysis • Preparing visual products | April 2026 |
| Bridging Local Voices and National Action in Just Energy Transition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting qualitative data through surveys and focus groups • Generating evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy activities | December 2026 |
| Gender Gap Analysis in North Macedonia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative analysis of the gender | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations with stakeholders • Preparing policy brie | December 2026 |

Analytics

The following analytical activities have been planned for 2026:

- Delivering 4 issues of the Macro-monitor – the macro-observer of the national economy with a forward looking elements;
- Delivering at least 3 FT Comments – a commentary of important national and international documents, reports, strategies and so on, concerning North Macedonia;
- Delivering few issues of FT Opinion – a condensed and swift reaction to the moves of the daily economic policy and trends;
- Producing at least 3 policy studies on topics related to labor market, state aid, fiscal transparency, poverty, participatory budgeting and/or economic development;
- Producing visual products: at least 15 Info-graphs and 40 graphs on 'hot' economic topics;
- Improving the economic datasets to be available for analysis purposes by the other NGOs and other interested parties, and presenting those data in an easily understandable format for non-economists;

Table presenting stages and deadlines

| Activity | Stage | Planned tasks | Deadline |
|---------------------|--------------|--|------------------------|
| Macro-monitor | Ongoing | Devising 4 issues | Continuously over 2026 |
| FT Comment | Ongoing | Devising at least 3 issues | Continuously over 2026 |
| FT Opinion | Ongoing | Devising few issues | Continuously over 2026 |
| Policy studies | Ongoing | Producing at least 3 | Continuously over 2026 |
| Visual products | Ongoing | Devising at least 10 info-graphs and 40 graphs | Continuously over 2026 |
| Improving data-sets | Ongoing | Improving the datasets | Continuously over 2026 |

Advocacy and Communication

The following advocacy and communication activities have been planned for 2026:

- Continuous publication of research results and findings in form of articles in international peer-reviewed journals; chapters in books and so on;
- Devising at least three policy briefs on issues pertinent to the economic development in North Macedonia and stemming out of current research;
- Organization of a regional meetings within WebEcon Network;
- Organization of closing events for the projects that end in 2026;
- Organization of an awareness campaign on economic topics;
- Advocating for more space for economic news in the media;
- Organization of consultative meetings with state aid stakeholders.



Table presenting stages and deadlines

| Activity | Stage | Planned tasks | Deadline |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---|------------------------|
| International publication | Ongoing | Articles, monographs, book chapters | Continuously over 2026 |
| Policy briefs | Ongoing | Devising at least 3 issues | Continuously over 2026 |
| Regional meetings | Ongoing | Organization of meetings within WebEcon Network, to discuss issues related to the regional projects | Continuously over 2026 |
| Closing events | Not started yet | Organization of closing event to present the results of the project related to the public procurements in municipalities of Prilep and Krushevo | March 2026 |
| Awareness campaign | Ongoing | Preparing visual products to increase knowledge on municipal budgets and other economic topics | Continuously over 2026 |
| Media | Ongoing | Increasing the presence in media | Continuously over 2026 |
| Consultative meetings | Ongoing | Strengthening the cooperation with state aid stakeholders | Continuously over 2026 |

Capacity Building and Networking

The following capacity building activities have been planned for 2026:

- Participation in at least two international conferences to present results of ongoing projects and/or to build network with international researchers;
- Participation at domestic conference, round tables, forums and other similar events, so as to present ongoing research and build networks with domestic researchers, other NGOs, government representatives and media;
- Participation on public consultation on, national budget, economic reforms and other relevant issues;
- Networking with worldwide CSOs that deal with participatory democracy issues;
- Participation at seminars for equipping with advocacy skills and research methods;
- Organizing workshops and webinars with state aid stakeholders from WB6;
- Securing a referent literature, mainly research methods and econometrics.

Table presenting stages and deadlines

| Activity | Stage | Planned tasks | Deadline |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--|------------------------|
| International conference | Ongoing | Participate on at least two conferences | Continuously over 2026 |
| Domestic conference | Ongoing | Participate on at least three events | Continuously over 2026 |
| Public consultations | Ongoing | Participate to public consultations on important economic issues | Continuously over 2026 |
| Regional networking | Ongoing | Attending meeting with regional NGOs and stakeholders | Continuously over 2026 |
| Trainings | Ongoing | Attending seminars for advocacy and research skills | Continuously over 2026 |
| Workshops and webinars | Not started yet | Organizing regional workshop and webinar on state aid | April 2026 |
| Literature | Ongoing | Securing relevant literature | Continuously over 2026 |

2026

Program of **ACTIVITIES**

Our Mission

To enhance the impact of economic, social and development trends and policies on citizens in North Macedonia and the Western Balkans, through research, evidence-based and data-driven advocacy, and steering critical debate on democratic and economic processes.

Our Vision

To steer economic thinking for increased wellbeing tomorrow.