

# EUROTHINK - Center for European Strategies Strategy 2020-2024

## VISION

The vision of EUROTHINK is for the Republic of North Macedonia to be a developed, democratic and liberal society based on the principles of justice, equality, freedom and prosperity. We see the EU integration process as the best instrument for achieving our vision.

## MISSION

EUROTHINK - Center for European Strategies is a non-governmental, non-partisan, non-profit and secular civic association that supports the integration of North Macedonia in the European Union and Europeanization of society through evidence-based public policy research and policy development, vocational training and advice, regional cooperation and advocacy for change.

## TARGET GROUPS IN THE FOCUS OF EUROTHINK ARE:

Citizens  
Decision-Makers  
Media  
Governments of democratic states  
International organizations

## Objectives of the Strategy

- A) Constructive support for processes, policies, and stakeholders whose actions are focused on achieving our vision and mission;
- B) Achieving program, financial and political independence of the organization by further diversifying the financial and program portfolio and increasing the share of revenue from services provided;
- C) Further professionalization of the organization based on the principles of integrity, independence from political centers of power and consistency in action.



## Working Methods

- A) **RESEARCH** (Evidence-Based Policy Research and Critical Analysis based on precise methodology);
- B) **MONITORING** (Monitoring of policies and institutions that are part of the accession process and tasked with protecting the public interest);
- C) **ADVOCACY** (advocating for change through effective communication with citizens, including through increased use of the opportunities provided by the digital society);
- D) **CAPACITY BUILDING** (Education, Training, Mentoring and Capacity Building).

## Working Programs

In the period 2019-2022, the work of EUROTHINK – Center for European Strategies will be structured in four independent programs, which inevitably overlap in certain areas.

### 1. Program “EU Accession Process“

The Program “EU Accession Process” encompasses the activities that represent a unique combination of the key traditional products of the organization with innovative tools. This is the core program representing the activities that have made the organization recognizable over the last decade.

As a key innovation, starting from October 2019, EUROTHINK will launch and maintain a specialized website, two domains have been provided for this purpose: [www.eu.inf.mk](http://www.eu.inf.mk) and [www.eu.org.mk/EuropeanUnion](http://www.eu.org.mk/EuropeanUnion) which will represent: 1) Digital guide on the accession process, explaining and simplifying the complex process of EU accession and its benefits; 2) A repository of online resources related to EU accession; 3) A platform on which educative content related to the EU accession process will be created and published on a regular basis. This product will be the main axis and communication channel that will include all the content produced by the organisation.

In the period covered by the strategy, EUROTHINK will monitor the accession negotiations (if initiated) and provide its own assessments and proposals for improving the negotiating structure, negotiating positions as well as the administrative and institutional capacity of the country for EU accession. Through its traditional product, Comparative Analysis of Progress Reports, EUROTHINK will continue to evaluate North Macedonia's progress in the accession process, with due regard to the analysis of the neglected National Program for the Adoption of European Legislation.



EUROTHINK will continue to closely monitor the programming and absorption of IPA funds as well as the participation of Macedonian entities in the Programs of the Union, including through monitoring the work of the Sector Working Groups and dissemination of information to citizens and CSOs through our communication channels.

The Eurometer survey will remain a key research product of the organisation in the next 4 years, and EUROTHINK will conduct at least one survey per year, resulting in several research products. During this period, the organisation will invest in better representation and digitalization of the extensive databases created over the past six years.

EUROTHINK will continue to work on the Accession Log, a public policy analysis tool that is published on a regular basis (at least four entries per year). The organization of EuroTalk events under Chatham House rules will continue, at least four each year.

## **2. Program “Regional Integration”**

This program includes: 1) harmonization of bilateral relations of the country with the neighboring EU-member states; 2) participation in and promotion of instruments for deepening the regional cooperation which are complementary to the enlargement process, such as the Berlin Process, the initiative to create a Regional Economic area etc., and 3) bilateral and multilateral political, economic, security and other forms of cooperation between the countries from the Balkans and Southeast Europe.

In the past two years, the Republic of North Macedonia has significantly improved bilateral relations with the neighboring countries by signing good neighborly agreements with Bulgaria and Greece. Implementation of the agreements has inevitably become a state investment in the hope of unblocking European integration and NATO membership. Thus, the implementation of agreements became an integral part of the policy of conditionality and the EU accession process. In recent years, EUROTHINK has been working on harmonization of the relations with Greece and Bulgaria through supporting the Prespa Agreement as an investment in stabilization of the region. In the forthcoming period, EUROTHINK will closely monitor the implementation of the Prespa Agreement and will launch and support initiatives for increased cooperation and confidence building between actors from North Macedonia and Greece, including through the SIMPHONY Program. One of the main activities will be networking with actors from Greece and Bulgaria and creating a joint platform that is going to advocate for unblocking the European integration in front of the reluctant governments in Western Europe.

In times of enlargement fatigue, reduced public support among EU citizens for EU enlargement, and democratic backsliding in some of the counties that are in process of accession negotiations, member states have launched a number of initiatives in recent year, one of them being the Berlin Process. EUROTHINK will continue to support those initiatives through organization of regional civil society forums, networking, research and joint advocacy with partners from the region.



### 3. Program “Security, Justice and Home Affairs“

In line with the “Fundamentals first” approach of the European Commission, Chapters 23 and 24 are the first ones to be opened and the last ones to be closed during the accession negotiations. A large number of CSOs implement activities related to Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Right), which has been also recognized by the donor community. On the other side, Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security) remain outside the actors’ interest, despite its importance and extensiveness as well as the obvious problems that the country is facing in this policy area. Reasons for this include lack of capacity of the CSOs, limited donor support, weak networks, lack of transparency of the security sector institutions and limited knowledge among the organizations.

In the previous period, EUROTHINK worked on addressing these deficiencies through developing its own portfolio and capacities for covering the topics under Chapter 24. Two representatives of the organization participated in the working groups tasked with development of a legislation package on reforming the intelligence and security community. In partnership with organizations from Serbia and Montenegro, EUROTHINK is working on a comparative analysis of the role of security services in state capture in the region. Furthermore, the organization is part of a large European consortium implementing a Horizon 2020 Project on the topic of migration. Moreover, as part of the Platform for Structural Dialogue, EUROTHINK is monitoring the work of the Sectorial working group on home affairs. The organization is very well networked with the key organizations and individuals who are recognized for their expertise in researching and addressing radicalization and violent extremism. The survey EUROMETER incorporates questions related to security and safety. At the same time, EUROTHINK is monitoring the process and benefits of the NATO accession, especially the aspects that are complementary to the EU accession process.

In the upcoming years, EUROTHINK will take a more structured and focused approach in dealing with these issues, through development of the program “Security, Justice and Home Affairs”. EUROTHINK will advocate for transparent and accountable security sector institutions that will be able to address the contemporary security threats in an effective and efficient manner. That is, the program will encompass activities directed towards the following topics: 1) Good governance in the security sector through promotion of transparent and accountable institutions subjected to strong democratic oversight and control; 2) Public safety, fight against organized crime and corruption; 3) Combating and preventing national security threats, challenges, vulnerabilities and risks (such as terrorism, violent extremism cyber threats, external influences, hybrid threats etc.); 4) International security; 5) Migration, asylum and freedom of movement.



## 4. EU for the citizens, active citizenship and public interest

European integration and the idea that the country will become an EU member state remain the driving force behind the reform processes and the best guarantee for the stability of the Western Balkan states. However, despite the improvement of the general political climate, post-authoritarian North Macedonia faces structural deficiencies in key areas related to the rule of law and the economy, while democratic consolidation remains vulnerable to internal (a possibility for re-capturing the system by the political elites) and external (soft power of undemocratic actors) negative influences. All of this might undermine citizens' confidence in the transformative potential of EU accession, reduce the support for reforms and increase the attractiveness of alternative models for development.

EUROTHINK sees the accession process, i.e. the so-called "European framework", as the best tool for protecting the public interest. For EUROTHINK, the European Union is an internal policy. In the past decade, the organization has specialized in monitoring institutions, regulatory bodies and policies that are relevant to the protection of public interest and the accession of RSM to the EU. In the past few years, the organization has also been working on demystifying the accession process and bringing it closer to the citizens, including through the use of digital communication.

In the next four years, EUROTHINK will continue to apply the unique combination of monitoring (watch dog) and informing and educating the citizens in order to increase public pressure for reform as a dominant approach in its work.

The work of the AVMS (Agency for audio and audiovisual services) and AEC (Agency for electronic communications) regulatory bodies, which is related to Chapter 10, the political criteria and the European Digital Agenda, will remain in our interest, and we will also examine the possibility of monitoring the work of other regulatory and oversight bodies. EUROTHINK will continue to support European initiatives aimed at making liberal democracy more resilient to contemporary challenges such as spreading fake news and misinformation, including through promotion of media literacy and critical thinking skills among young people, as we do within the the CriThink project as well as through our membership in the Media Literacy Network.

In the next four years, EUROTHINK will continue building its own capacities and develop a more structured approach in dealing with chapters related to rule of law and economic criteria, building upon the organization's past experience in areas such as: Public Procurement (Chapter 5), Competition Policy (Chapter 8), Judiciary and Fundamental Rights (Chapter 23), Foreign, Security, Defense Policy (Chapter 31), and Financial Control (Chapter 32).

