

LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING THE MÉNDEZ PRINCIPLES: FROM STANDARDS TO RESPONSIBILITY IN INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

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Key Messages

- The [Méndez Principles](#) provide an internationally recognised framework for lawful, effective and non-coercive investigative interviewing, grounded in procedural safeguards, reliable information and respect for human rights.
- North Macedonia has a relevant legal and institutional framework, but implementation remains uneven across institutions and professional practice.
- Stronger accountability requires clearer operational standards, consistent documentation and recording, effective supervision and mechanisms for reviewing compliance with procedural safeguards.
- Sustainable implementation depends on coordinated action by law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, training institutions and the legal profession.

Why This Matters

Investigative interviewing is a critical stage of criminal proceedings because the quality of information obtained can directly affect investigative decisions, prosecutorial assessments and the fairness of subsequent proceedings. The Méndez Principles provide an internationally recognised framework for lawful, effective and non-coercive interviewing, emphasising rapport-based approaches, procedural safeguards, attention to vulnerability, professional training, proper documentation and institutional oversight.

North Macedonia already has important legal safeguards concerning suspects, accused persons, witnesses and other interviewed individuals. However, legal guarantees alone do not ensure consistent practice. Effective implementation requires that safeguards be reflected in how interviews are conducted, documented, supervised and reviewed, and that shortcomings can be identified and addressed. Strengthening implementation therefore means connecting existing safeguards with clearer operational standards, professional practice, monitoring and institutional accountability.

Where North Macedonia Stands

North Macedonia has an important legal and institutional foundation for applying the Méndez Principles. Criminal procedure and related legislation provide safeguards including the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, access to legal assistance, the right to remain silent, interpretation where required, and additional protections for children and other vulnerable persons ([Kalajdziev et al., 2018](#); [Kambovski et al., 2018](#)).

Responsibility is shared among the Ministry of Interior, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the judiciary, the legal profession and professional training institutions, within the broader criminal justice framework. Internal and external mechanisms for oversight of police conduct also exist. The main challenge is therefore not the absence of safeguards, but their consistent translation into interviewing practice, particularly regarding methodology, training, vulnerability, recording, supervision and accountability ([Council of Europe, 2021](#); [Council of Europe, 2024](#)).

Implementation Gaps

The following implementation gaps are reflected in findings and observations from national and international monitoring mechanisms and academic and professional literature ([Council of Europe, 2021](#); [Council of Europe, 2024](#); [Ilikj Dimoski, 2024](#); [Misoski & Ilikj Dimoski, 2019](#); [Ombudsman of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2011–2025](#); [Stojanovski, 2015](#); [Stojanovski, 2019](#); [Trpenovski, 2024](#)).

- **No unified interviewing methodology.** Practice is not yet consistently guided by a common, evidence-based methodology aligned with the Méndez Principles.
- **Uneven training and professional practice.** Consistent application of non-coercive, rapport-based approaches requires further specialised and continuous training.
- **Inconsistent documentation and recording.** Investigative interviews are not systematically subject to audiovisual recording in all relevant circumstances.
- **Insufficient attention to vulnerability.** More consistent guidance is needed for identifying and responding to the needs of children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable interviewees.
- **Fragmented oversight and accountability.** Existing oversight mechanisms could be better coordinated to support systematic monitoring, identification of shortcomings and institutional accountability.

Policy Recommendations

- **Adopt a common national framework for investigative interviewing** aligned with the Méndez Principles and establishing minimum standards for planning, conducting, documenting and reviewing interviews.
- **Institutionalise specialised and continuous training** for police officers, prosecutors, judges, defence lawyers and other relevant practitioners.
- **Expand audiovisual recording of investigative interviews**, supported by clear rules on storage, access, confidentiality and evidentiary use.
- **Strengthen safeguards for vulnerable interviewees** through screening tools, adapted procedures and access to appropriate legal, psychological and other support.
- **Improve oversight and accountability** by clarifying institutional responsibilities and ensuring effective review and corrective action when shortcomings are identified.
- **Strengthen inter-institutional coordination** among the Ministry of Interior, Public Prosecutor's Office, judiciary, Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, Bar Association and other relevant bodies.

Moving from Standards to Practice

The priority for North Macedonia is to move from formal safeguards to their consistent application in everyday investigative practice. This requires improved interviewing methods and training, together with clear institutional responsibility for monitoring compliance and addressing shortcomings. Relevant institutions should translate the Méndez Principles into practical operational guidance, including the development or revision of standard operating procedures (SOPs), internal protocols and training materials for the planning, conduct, documentation and review of investigative interviews. Such measures should be supported by regular supervision, inter-institutional coordination and mechanisms for evaluating implementation in practice. A coordinated approach can translate the Méndez Principles into sustainable national practice and strengthen accountability throughout the investigative process.

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