

NORTH MACEDONIA AT A GLANCE

Foreign policy · Society · Economy · Culture

2020
EDITION

NORTH MACEDONIA

A T A G L A N C E



Foreign policy · Society · Economy · Culture

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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

I would like to extend gratitude to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation for publishing this book, a portrait of my country. The following texts will give you a flavour of the social and political life, the economic situation, and culture in the Republic of North Macedonia. The authors have chosen an analytical and objective approach on a broad variety of topics, making the book informative and attractive for all readers.

Even though the Republic of North Macedonia is relatively small in terms of territory and population, with about 2 million inhabitants living in an area of 25.713 square kilometres, its diversity is exceptional.

Owing to the experience gained from living in various constellations in the course of history, and in various contexts with regard to culture and civilisation, Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Serbs, Roma, Bosniaks and other ethnic communities live side by side, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation.

Remarkable personalities were born on the territory of today's North Macedonia. Their names have become synonyms for enlightenment and mercy, such as Saint Clement of Ohrid, the European-scale educator, or Mother Teresa, the founder of the Missionaries of Charity. Meanwhile, exchange was never a one-way street. After the devastating earthquake of 1963, the capital Skopje was completely rebuilt thanks to global solidarity. Today, European

and global partners are again offering their assistance for the institutional transformation of the Republic of North Macedonia into a modern, advanced European state.

North Macedonia is committed to offering its citizens a European future. Therefore, the country settled its unresolved issues, became a member of NATO and is starting accession negotiations with the European Union. Apart from belonging to Europe's cultural and educational sphere, North Macedonia will also become part of the political, legal and economic space of a united Europe.

Its rich cultural and historical heritage, its natural rarities and beauties protected in national parks, and its hospitable citizens with their authentic traditions make North Macedonia a unique tourist destination.

Moreover, due to its location, its transport connections, its monetary stability, the openness of Macedonian business, as well as the European reforms and NATO membership, North Macedonia is a highly attractive destination for foreign investments.

This book is a handy guide. Not only will you learn more about my country, but you will also want to visit it. In the meantime, enjoy the following pages! ■

Stevo Pendarovski

President of the Republic of North Macedonia

INTRODUCTION

In more than ten chapters we would like to present different perspectives on the Republic of North Macedonia. It has been an honour for us to have ten respected and well-known Macedonian authors, specialists with different fields of expertise that give to us their in-depth insights in order to raise awareness about their country, its people, possibilities and challenges, thus offering us the opportunity to better understand North Macedonia in these stormy, but also very successful political days.

An extensive introduction can be found in the **first** chapter. It addresses challenges of the ethnic composition of the population in the Republic of North Macedonia and the complex political system related to it. This overview serves as a basis for an in-depth understanding of everyday life in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The **second** chapter is based on the previous one. It deals with facets of the three powers according to the Macedonian constitution and sketches the public institutions of the country.

The **third** chapter is of paramount importance to better understand the Macedonian society and politics. Starting from the Ilinden Uprising and the proclamation of the Kruševo Republic in 1903, the author describes North Macedonia's way to statehood. He presents challenges and obstacles that this young state has faced so far and which we hope

to overcome. Definitely, integration into the European Union remains the primary goal of Macedonian foreign policy.

Economic upswing leads to prospering general welfare. In the **fourth** chapter, we describe the legal foundations and key initiatives of the Republic of North Macedonia in the field of economic policy. For a young state, these are the main guidelines for the years to come.

Aspects of environmental and energy policy, as well as the issues of global climate change, are also gaining importance in the Republic of North Macedonia. Reducing the air pollution in built-up areas, especially around greater Skopje, is becoming increasingly significant. Macedonian society becomes ever more aware of the waste management problems and the need of reducing plastic waste. However, many steps are left to be taken in order to achieve sustainable success. The **fifth** chapter describes the requirements and necessary measures in detail.

In the **sixth** chapter we take a look at the efforts of the education policy of the Republic of North Macedonia. According to the government, education, research and the will to innovation are the key factors to strengthen the Macedonian economy and the welfare of its people. This is related to the aim to develop an education system that focuses on learners and is based on modern learning programmes which should provide future generations with the necessary knowledge, skills

and capabilities to meet the requirements of a well-functioning, democratic, and multicultural society, in accordance with the European model. Those assets are equally needed to meet the requirements of the constantly changing labour market and new global challenges, as well as to assume an active role in the design of these processes.

The Republic of North Macedonia is characterised by its multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. The **seventh** chapter gives an impression of the religious landscape and the efforts of the civil society. Another aspect the chapter deals with is the emigration from North Macedonia, which has been lasting for decades, including an overview of where people have tried to find a new life beyond their homeland.

Free media plays an important role in the free development of civil society and equal political competition. The **eighth** chapter describes the current situation of media in the Republic of North Macedonia, including the development of digital media.

In the **ninth and tenth** chapter we discuss the cultural heritage and the current „Macedonian way of life“ in detail. The authors give a diverse picture of the country and point out why North Macedonia is worth visiting and getting to know, especially when it comes to its people. The Republic of North Macedonia inspires with its everyday culture. It engages the visitor, invites to participate, and integrates. Join us on a journey to the Republic of North Macedonia. The **eleventh** and final chapter would like to take one last, brief look at a very important area, Macedonian sport.

Finally, on the last pages of our publication, you will find a summary of additional facts and information about the Republic of North Macedonia.

We have composed an overview of the most important data from the last decades, which clearly depict the remarkable will to be sovereign and to integrate with NATO and the European Union.

We cannot present a complete picture of the country, but we still wanted to mention some important Macedonian personalities from the areas of religion, culture, sports, and politics. Certainly, you are familiar with some of these persons, while you might not know that they are Macedonian. And, definitely, you may know other important persons from North Macedonia that we have not listed here.

To sum up, we would like to draw your attention to one of the most precious treasures of the country. Although we do not see our publication primarily as a travel guide focused on tourist destinations, the picture would definitely not be complete without the national parks and the double world heritage of the City of Ohrid with its lake.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this publication that aims to bring closer the Republic of North Macedonia, its everyday life, its people and their wishes, and we hope that reading it will provide you with some pleasant surprises. ■

Holger-Michael Arndt

Managing Director of the *CIVIC Institut für internationale Bildung*

Honorary Consul of the *Republic of North Macedonia*

AT A GLANCE

The Republic • Crests & Symbols • Demographics •
Geography & Climate • Famous Macedonians

by Daniel Gjokeski

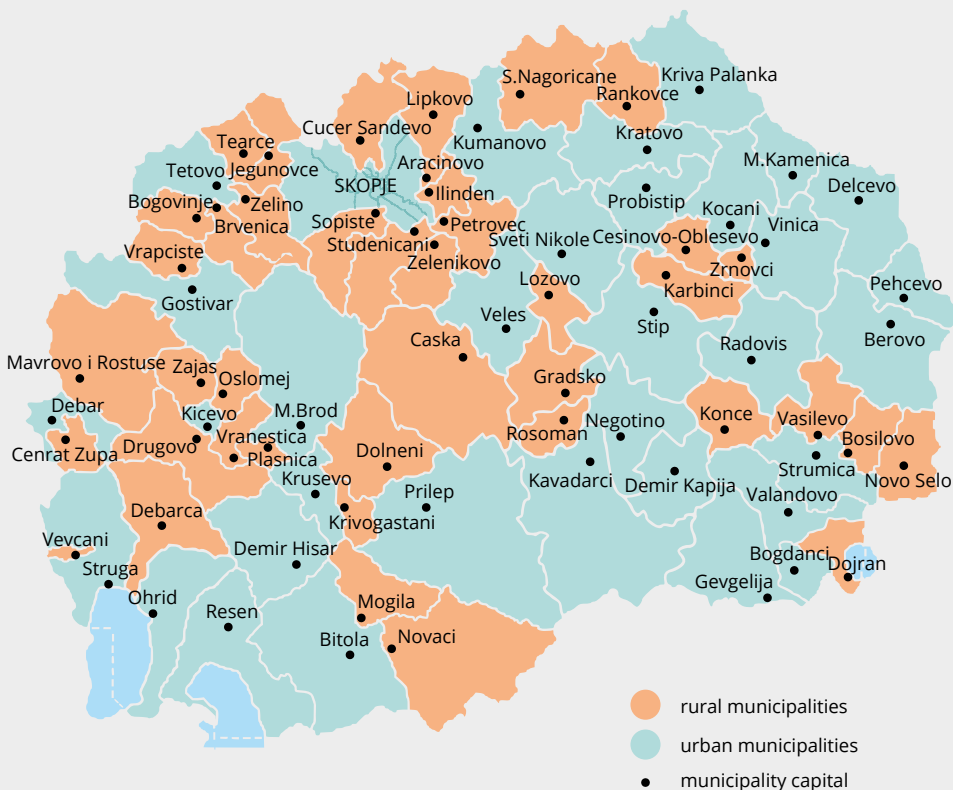
Project Developer in the fields of education and youth empowerment

THE REPUBLIC

The Republic of North Macedonia is a sovereign and independent state at the heart of the Balkan Peninsula. It is a representative parliamentary democracy with an executive government composed of a coalition of parties from the unicameral Assembly, and an independent judicial branch with a constitutional court. The President of the Republic is the head of state, and the President of the Government (Prime-Minister) is the head of government. After gaining independence in September 1991,

the Republic of North Macedonia was swift in drafting a Constitution which was adopted by the Assembly on November 17th, 1991, establishing it as the highest act within the state's legal system. Its content is typical for a liberal-democratic state. With the adoption of a new law and elections held in 2005, local government functions were divided among 78 municipalities. The capital Skopje comprises ten municipalities, collectively referred to as the "City of Skopje". Municipalities in North Macedonia are units of local self-government. ■

The administrative map of municipalities in North Macedonia



Municipalities of the City of Skopje



Coat of arms



The **coat of arms** is composed of two curved garlands of sheaves of wheat, tobacco leaves and opium poppy fruits, tied by a ribbon decorated with the embroidery of traditional folk motives. In the centre of the frame, a mountain, a lake and a sunrise are depicted. These symbols are said to represent the richness of the country and its struggle for freedom.

Flag



The **flag** of the Republic of North Macedonia depicts a stylized yellow sun on a red field with eight broadening rays extending from the centre to the edges. The sun represents “the new sun of liberty” referred to in the national anthem of the Republic of North Macedonia, „Denes nad Makedonija“ (Денес над Македонија, “Today Over Macedonia”), written by the Macedonian author Vlado Maleski in 1941. The flag was created by Miroslav Grčev and adopted on 5th of October 1995.

Currency



The **national currency** is the Macedonian denar (MKD). Banknotes of 10, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000 and 2000 as well as coins of 1, 2, 5, 10 and 50 denars are used. Since 1996, a large number of commemorative coins for collectors have been issued. Foreign currency should be exchanged at banks and authorized exchange offices.

Constitution



The **constitution** establishes a clear division of powers and defines the Republic of North Macedonia as a contemporary European democratic state.

National holiday



National public holidays in the Republic of North Macedonia are New Year's Day (1st of January), Orthodox Christmas Day (7th of January), Orthodox Easter Day, Labour Day (1st of May), Saints Cyril and Methodius Day (24th of May), Eid al-Fitr (Ramazan Bajram, 15th of June), Republic Day (2nd of August), Independence Day (8th of September), Day of the Macedonian Uprising in 1941 (11th of October), Day of the Macedonian Revolutionary Struggle (23rd of October), and Saint Clement of Ohrid Day (8th of December). Additionally, there are several major religious and ethnic communities' holidays.

Domain



The **Internet country code top-level domain (ccTLD)** for the Republic of North Macedonia is .mk. It is administered by the Macedonian Academic Research Network (MARnet). Available second-level domains are: .mk, .com.mk, .org.mk, .net.mk, .edu.mk, .gov.mk, .inf.mk, .biz.mk, and .mob.mk. The Cyrillic domain .mkд was officially approved and registered on March 20th of 2014.

National Anthem

"Denes nad Makedonija" (Macedonian: Денес над Македонија, English: "Today Over Macedonia") is the national anthem of the Republic of North Macedonia. Both the music and lyrics date from the early 1940s. Todor Skalovski composed the music, while the lyrics were written by Vlado Maleski. It was adopted as the Macedonian national anthem in 1992, a year after the state's independence was declared. The anthem had already been used in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia while it was part of Yugoslavia.

$\text{♩} = 88$

De- nes nad Ma- ke- do- ni- ja se ra- ga, no- vo son- ce
Od- no- vo se- ga zna- me- to se ve- e, na Kru- s- hev- ska-
Go- ri- te Ma- ke- don- ski xum- no pe- at, no- vi pes- ni,

na slo- bo- da- ta! Ma- ke- don- ci- te se bo- rat , za svoi- te prav- di-
ta Re- pu- bli- ka! Go- ce Del- qev, Pi- tu Gu- li, Da- me Gru ev, San- dan-
no- vi ves- ni- ci! Ma- ke- do- ni- ja slo- bod- na, slo- bo- dna жи- ve-

ni! Ma- ke- don- ci- te se bo- rat , za svoi- te prav- di- ni!
ski! Go- ce Del- qev, Pi- tu Gu- li, Da- me Gru ev, San- dan- ski!
e! Ma- ke- do- ni- ja slo- bod- na, slo- bod- na zi- ve- e!

DEMOGRAPHICS

The average lifespan in the Republic of North Macedonia is 75.41 years, while the average age is 38.5 years. As for age structure, the population is getting increasingly older. Between 2005 and 2015, the share of young people (0-14 years) dropped from 19.4% to 16.7%, whereas the share of the older population (65 and above) increased from 11.1% to 13.0%, amounting to 265,570 persons. Demographic indicators on a regional level point to differences symptomatic of discrepancies in the population's territorial distribution. The population of the Skopje Region, which is most densely populated, is almost twice as dense as the most sparsely populated Vardar Region.

According to the last census in 2002, Macedonians form the largest ethnic group in the Republic of North Macedonia. The second largest group are the Albanians, who are concentrated in the north-western part of the country. Estimates indicate a Roma population of up to 260,000.

Up to 65% of the population follow Orthodox Christianity, with most of them belonging to the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Other Christian religions account for 0.4% of the population. Muslims account for 33% of the population. North Macedonia has the 5th highest proportion of Muslims in Europe. Most of the Muslims are Turks, Roma or Albanians, while there is a small number of Macedonian Muslims. ■

LIFE EXPECTANCY

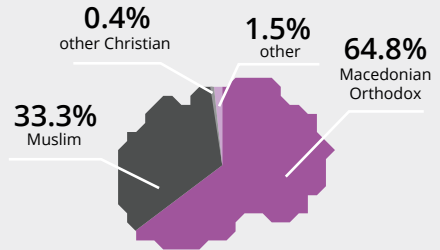
78 years / 73 years

Women

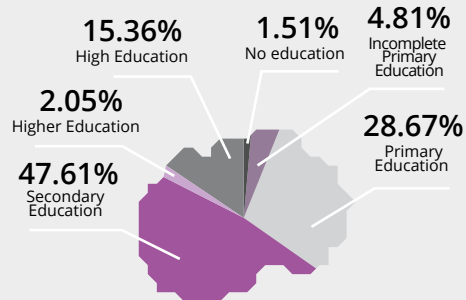
Men



RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

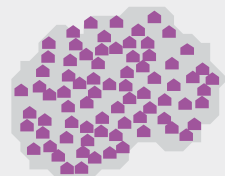


WORKING POPULATION BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION



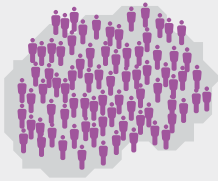
HOUSEHOLDS

561,693



POPULATION

2,074,502

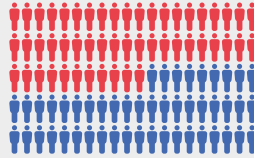


GENDER DISTRIBUTION

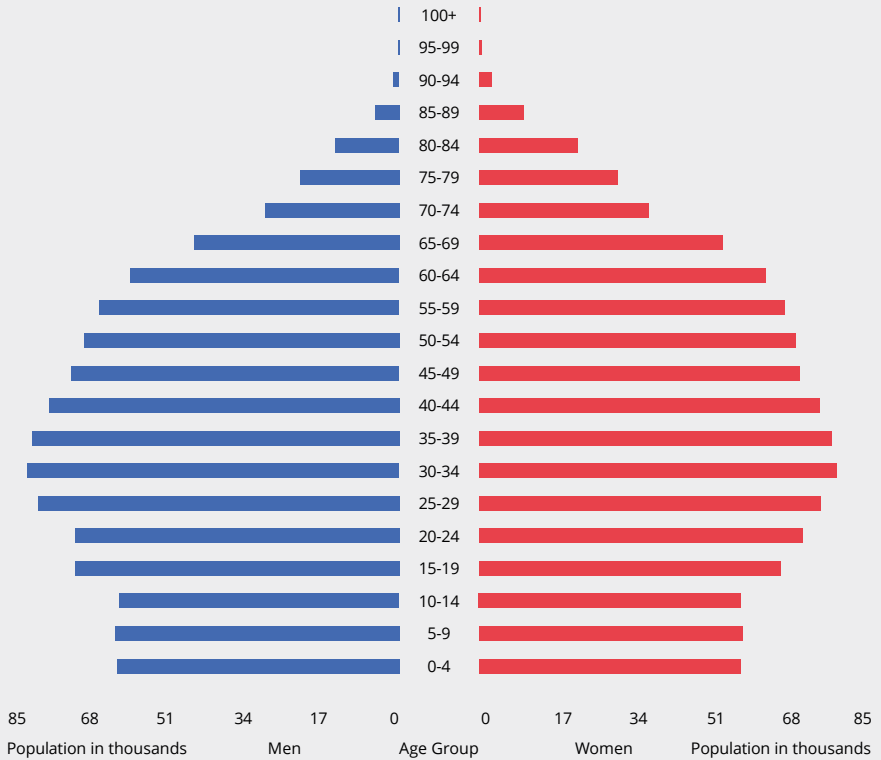
1,035,554 1,038,948

Women

Men



AGE STRUCTURE



GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

The Republic of North Macedonia is situated in south-eastern Europe, at the heart of the Balkan Peninsula. It covers an area of 25.713 square kilometres and has some 2.1. million inhabitants, with 1.179.111 living in the urban areas. The Republic of North Macedonia has three national parks: Pelister, Mavrovo, and Galičica, covering an area of 130.000 hectares. These national parks provide opportunities for a variety of sports and leisure activities during all four seasons, such as paragliding, scuba diving, horse riding, skiing and snowboarding, mountain biking, hiking, kayaking and canoeing. The Republic of North Macedonia has more than thirty mountain peaks of over 2.000 meters and 968.033 of hectares of forest. The lowest altitude is 44 meters, and the highest peak, Golem Korab, is 2.764 meters high. Lake Ohrid and the city of Ohrid are cultural monuments protected by UNESCO. Lake Ohrid is one of the oldest natural lakes of the planet, with its deepest point being 286 meters. Beside Lake Ohrid, there are several other lakes that are unique attractions, such as Lake Prespa with 62 bird species enlisted on the List of Protected Species by the Bern Convention, the Dojran Lake with its unique creation legend, Mavrovo Lake, which holds a half-submerged church, and Lake Spilje near Debar, the second biggest artificial lake in after Lake Tikveš, both considered perfect for boating and fishing activities. 62 types and 56 subtypes of fish live in the lakes and rivers. The longest river is the Vardar, which is 420 kilo meters long and cuts the Republic of North Macedonia in two. The capital Skopje has more than 600.000 inhabitants. It is the country's economic and cultural centre with a synthesis of traditional and modern architecture. ■

LOCATION

Southeast Europe



SURFACE AREA

25,713 km²



CAPITAL

Skopje

571.46 km²



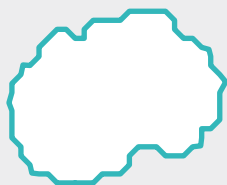
HOURS OF SUN
2041 hours



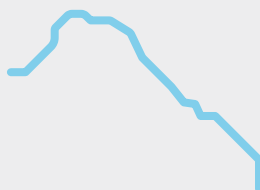
RAIN
500-700 mm
(mountainous region of
the country over 1000 mm)



BORDERLINE
897 km



LONGEST RIVER
Vardar
301 km in Macedonia



FORESTED AREA
835,055.82 ha



HIGHEST MOUNTAIN
Mount Korab
2.764 m



FAMOUS MACEDONIANS

Macedonians take great pride in and have immense respect for their revolutionary past. Having been part of the Ottoman Empire for five centuries, the country certainly values the people who made history by raising their voices and risking their lives in the fight against occupation.

These people, immortalized in monuments, paintings and songs, are constantly present in everyday life, and Macedonians celebrate their life as a reminder of the struggle that the nation went through to gain independence and enjoy the liberty we have today.

Culture also plays an important role in the life of Macedonians, as a statement of national identity. There are few artists who have made their mark on the world stage, which is why they have gained the status of heroes and are worshipped by their fellow Macedonians because of their work as ambassadors of their country. ■



Goce Delčev

(1872-1903)

Delčev, who was a school teacher, was a key member of the International Macedonian Revolutionary Organization and is hence considered a Macedonian national hero in Macedonia's struggle for independence against the Ottoman rule.



Metodi Andonov - Čento

(1902-1957)

A prominent fighter against fascism, the President of the Anti-Fascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Macedonia, as well as the first President of the People's Republic of Macedonia following the end of World War II.



Mother Theresa

(1910-1997)

Born Anjeze Gonxhe Bojaxhiu in Skopje in 1910, of Albanian ethnicity, founder of the Missionaries of Charity congregation, widely known and acclaimed for her humanitarian work with the Roman Catholic Church. She was canonized by Pope Francis on 4th of September 2016.



Nikola Karev

(1877-1905)

A famous Macedonian revolutionary known for his role in the Ilinden uprising, an attempt by Macedonians to liberate themselves from the Ottoman rule.

During this period he authored the Kruševo Manifesto: a document outlining the aims of the Macedonian uprising against the Ottomans.



Krste Petkov Misirkov

(1874-1926)

Krste Petkov Misirkov is considered the founder of the contemporary Macedonian language. Misirkov is one of Macedonia's most well known philologists and historians.



Blaže Koneski

(1921-1993)

Blaže Koneski was a well-known author, poet, linguist, founder and the first President of the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences. Koneski is considered the key codifier of the contemporary Macedonian language.



Nikola Martinoski

(1903-1973)

Considered one of the founders of Macedonian contemporary painting, Nikola Martinoski was a member of the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences. He won numerous prizes at home and abroad.



Esma Redžepova

(1943-2016)

Esma Redžepova was a famous singer and humanitarian of Romani ethnicity. Redžepova was also known for her humanitarian work which was focused on helping underprivileged children.



Simon Trpčeski

(1979)

Macedonia's famous classical pianist. Simon Trpčeski's career takes him all over the world to perform with some of the world's finest orchestras and conductors.

THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Republic of North Macedonia is a sovereign and independent state. It is a parliamentary representative democratic republic with a President as head of state and a President of the Government (Prime-minister) as head of government. In the following chapter, we will examine the general aspects of the legal and political systems of the state. ■



Stevo Pendarovski, born 1963, SDSM, State President since May 2019



Zoran Zaev, born 1974, SDSM, President of the Government since August 2020



Talat Xhaferi, born 1962, DUI, President of the Assembly since April 2017



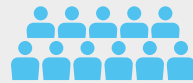
The people

All Macedonian citizens who are at least 18 years old are eligible to vote. They elect Members of the Assembly in a direct secret ballot election.



Assembly

The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia is the representative body of the citizens, which exercises the legislative function.



Government

The Government is elected by the Assembly. The Government bears the primary executive function.



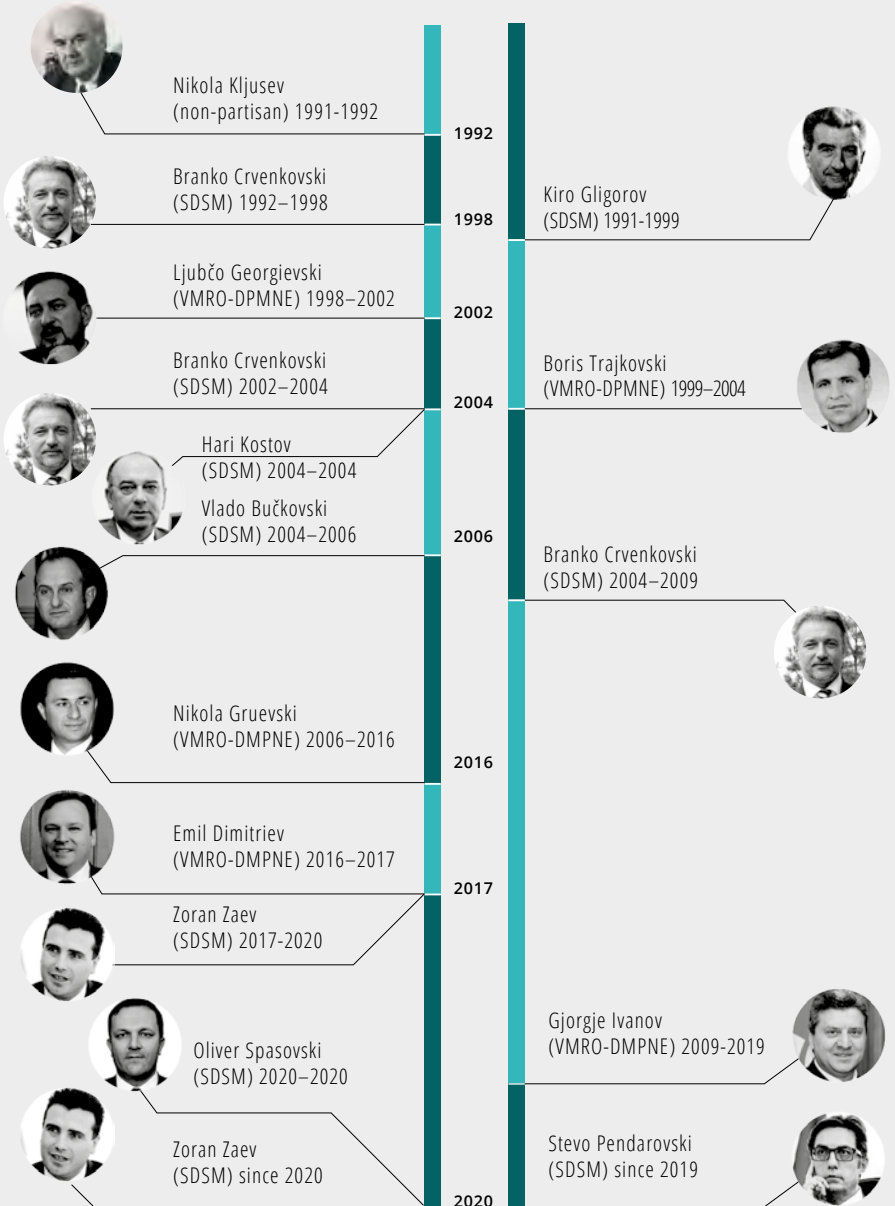
State President

The President of the Republic of North Macedonia, the head of state, is elected by direct, secret ballot for a mandate of five years, with a two-term limit.

Presidents of the Government & State Presidents

Presidents of the Government

State Presidents



THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Constitution • The Legislative Branch • The Executive Branch
• The Judicial Branch • Public Administration

by Davor Pasoski

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Office in Skopje

The Republic of North Macedonia is a sovereign and independent state. It is a parliamentary representative democratic republic with a President as head of state and a President of the Government (Prime-minister) as head of government. In this chapter, we will examine the general aspects of the legal and political systems of the state.

THE CONSTITUTION

Every overview of a contemporary legal and political system, of course, starts with the highest legal act of the country. In most nations, this is their constitution. After gaining independence in September 1991, the country was swift in drafting a Constitution, which was adopted in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia (the national parliament) on November 17th, 1991, establishing it as the highest legal act within the nation's legal system.

The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia introduced a clear division of powers, as is necessary for a contemporary European democratic state. It constitutes

the sovereignty of the state, while, of course, also encompassing specific rights of citizens. Reading through its content, it is clear that it represents **a Constitution typical for a liberal-democratic state**. A basic analysis of the Constitution leads to the conclusion that North Macedonia is a **parliamentary democracy**.

The Constitution's content is divided into nine parts:

The **first part** covers basic provisions related to the Republic of North Macedonia, including sovereignty, citizenship, the national flag, emblem and anthem, language, as well as ►



The Crystal Hall at the Assembly

► the fundamental values of the nation.

The **second part** (which, in terms of content and scope, is the largest) is dedicated to the basic rights and freedoms of citizens.

The **third part** encompasses provisions related to the organization of the bodies of government, including the judiciary.

The **fourth part** regulates matters related to the Constitutional Court of the country.

The **fifth part** contains the basic provisions related to local self-government.

The **sixth part** covers provisions related to international relations.

Part seven covers issues related to the defense, martial law and state of emergency.

Part eight contains provisions on the procedures related to amending the Constitution.

Part nine contains transitional and final provisions, including specific provisions

for a transition from the previous to the new constitutional system.

The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia was amended in 2001, in accordance with the **Ohrid Framework Agreement**, a peace Agreement brokered by the European Union and the United States to end the 2001 Conflict. The subject of this Agreement, and the amendments that result from it, are specific rights of ethnic minorities.

The constitution of the country was also amended in 2019, in accordance with the **Prespa Agreement** signed in June 2018 between North Macedonia and Greece under which the country was renamed as the Republic of North Macedonia. With the Prespa Agreement, North Macedonia agreed to change its constitutional name in order to resolve a decades-old dispute that Greece had over the usage of the name Macedonia. After the signing of the agreement, by January 2019 the Macedonian and Greek legislatures had both approved the measures necessary to pave the way for formal adoption of the new name, which came into effect on February 12th, 2019. ■

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

PARLIAMENT

The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia is the representative body of the citizens, which conducts the legislative function. Its Members (*Pratenitsi/Пратеници* in Macedonian) are elected via direct secret-ballot elections, by a **proportional representation electoral system**. Currently, the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia can elect up to 123 members to the **unicameral Assembly**. Starting with the constitutive session of the Assembly, the mandate of its Members is up to four years.

The Members of the Assembly elect the **President of the Assembly** as well as **Vice-Presidents**. The President of the Assembly represents the Assembly, convenes and manages sessions, applies the Rules of Procedure, and communicates with the Representatives of the Parliamentary groups., as well as the President of the Republic of North Macedonia and the President of the Government (Prime-Minister).

The Assembly has permanent and other working bodies which support the efficiency of its proceedings. These bodies look over

legislation which is adopted by the Assembly, follow the execution of legislation, and analyze other issues in the framework of their competencies. They also establish international cooperation within their competencies.

The Permanent working bodies of the Assembly currently include the following Committees: Constitutional Issues; Legislative and Legal Affairs; Defense and Security; Political System and Inter-Ethnic Relations; Finances and Budget; Culture; Health; European Affairs; Equal Opportunities for Women and Men; Education, Science and Sport, etc.

Other Working bodies include the Inter-Community Relations Committee. The Assembly is also represented in the **National Council on European Integration**, which, apart from the MP's, includes the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for European Affairs, a Representative of the President, a Representative of the President of the Government, a representative of the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences, a Representative of the Community of Units of Local-Self Government, as well as a representative of the Association of Journalists. The Assembly also has various **delegations to parliamentary assemblies**, including those to the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

The Assembly elects a **Secretary-General**, who is responsible for organizing the functioning of the administrative service of the Assembly. ■

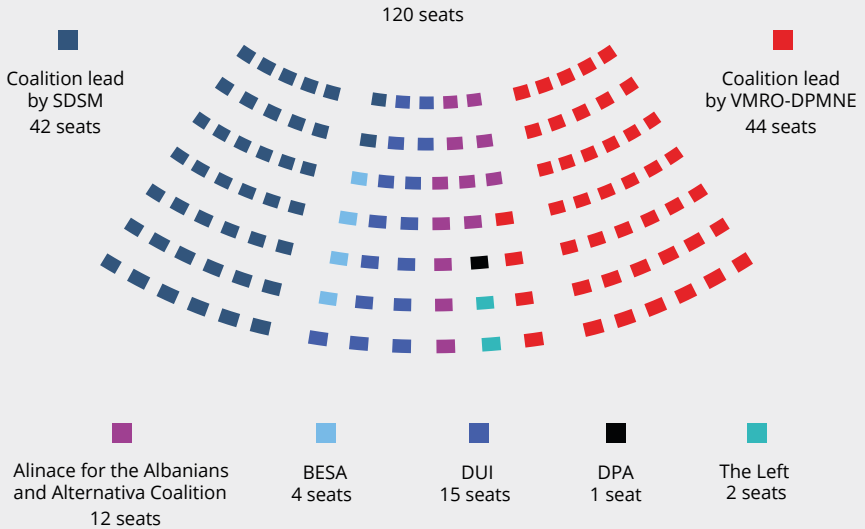
 INTERNET

The Assembly of the Republic
Elections, Members of Parliament,
parliamentary groups

→ sobranie.mk

The Assembly

The Assembly has at least 120 members. The 10th composition of the Macedonian Assembly, elected in 2020, has 120 members



Parties



Coalition "We can"
(SDSM, BESA and others)
2020 election result:
35.89%



Coalition lead by the Internal
Macedonian Revolutionary
Organization –
Democratic Party for
Macedonian National Unity
(VMRO-DPMNE and others)
2020 election result: 34.57%



Democratic Union
for Integration
(DUI)
2020 election result: 11.48%



Alinace for the Albanians
and Alternativa Coalition
2020 election result:
8.95%



The Left
2020 election result:
4.1%



Democratic Party
of Albanians (DPA)
2020 election result:
1.53%

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

The President of the Republic of North Macedonia, who is the head of state, is elected by direct secret-ballot elections for a **mandate of five years**, with a **two-term limit**. He gives his Oath of Office in front of the Assembly. Although throughout country's democratic history, it has been argued many times that the President has only a "monarch-like" function in terms of competencies, the role actually comprises a large number of responsibilities and tasks, especially in foreign policy and defense, as he is the **Supreme Commander of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia**.

In terms of foreign policy, the President represents the Republic of North Macedonia in international relations. In this function, he **appoints the ambassadors of the Republic of North Macedonia abroad** and **receives letters of accreditation of foreign ambassadors to North Macedonia**. The President also concludes international agreements in the name of the state.

In his role as Supreme Commander, the President **appoints the Chief of Staff of the Army**, as well as Generals. He chairs the National Security Council, and appoints three members to it. In this role, he also **appoints the Director of the Intelligence Agency**.

 INTERNET

The President of the Republic
State visits, appointments, duties

→ pretsedatel.mk

In relation to the work of the Government, the role of the President is vital, as he is responsible for **giving the mandate for the formation of the Government**. He also recommends two members of the Constitutional Court, two members of the Judicial Council, as well as the Governor of the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia, who are all subject to election by the Assembly.

The role of the President of the Republic is also very important for the normative function of government. Namely, the President **signs decrees for the proclamation of laws**. He has the constitutional right to reject the signing of such a decree if, in his view, the legislation is not in accordance with the Constitution or with established international norms and agreements. In this case, the law is returned to the Assembly for revision. If it is passed a second time with a majority of the total number of Members of the Assembly, the President, according to the Constitution, is obligated to sign the decree for proclamation (although no time-frame is specified as to how soon the decree should be signed). This means that **the President has the right to veto legislation, and, arguably, the possibility of using a "pocket veto" exists**.

The President of the Republic also has the **constitutionally mandated right to grant amnesty**.

The Office of the President and its staff are managed by the **Secretary-General of the President**. ■



The State President Pendarovski and the National Guard in front of his residence

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC

The Government is elected by the Assembly. After the President gives the mandate for the formation of the Government, the person granted the mandate (the leader of the parliamentary majority) has twenty days to form it.

The Government bears the primary executive function in the Republic of North Macedonia. It consists of a **President** (Prime-Minister), **Ministers** and **Deputy Ministers**. It is the role and responsibility of the President to lead the government in accordance with the previously defined program priorities.

The Ministers are independent in carrying out the competencies and obligations of the bodies of government (in most cases, ministries) which they manage. The role of the Deputy Minister is to carry out the executive function together with the Minister, and replace her or him when necessary.

The current Government consists of **sixteen Ministries** with the following portfolios: Defense; Internal Affairs; Justice; Foreign Affairs; Finance; Economy; Culture; Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy; Health; Educa-

tion and Science; Labour and Social Policy; Local Self-Government; Information Society and Administration; Transport and Communications; Environment and Urban Planning; Political System and Inter-Community Relations.

There are **two Secretariats**, The Secretariat for European Affairs and the Secretariat for Legislation.

The Government has significant and widespread executive competencies. It is responsible for the execution of legislation, has a normative function which entails the proposal of legislation (including the Budget), widespread competencies in foreign policy (in collaboration with the President), and competencies in naming or proposing officials for specific roles and functions, including the State Public Prosecutor (who is subject to election by the Assembly).

In the Republic of North Macedonia, the role of President, Minister or Deputy Minister is incompatible with the role of Member of the Assembly.

The functioning as a “centre of government” (the administrative function of the Government, as well as the organization of the work of the Cabinet) is organized by the General Secretariat of the Government, which is lead by a Secretary-General who is chosen by the Government. ■

→ INTERNET

The Government of the Republic
Composition, duties, sessions

→ vlada.mk



Government's building

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The key to a functional state is always a responsive, efficient and economically effective public sector. In the past years, North Macedonia has implemented various reforms aimed at creating a professional public service which carries out its service function professionally. To that goal, various e-services have been implemented. Currently, the country has 1,324 institu-

tions within the public sector. These include institutions on both the central and local level, such as the various ministries, typical bodies of government (agencies, inspectorates, etc.), and municipalities, but also hospitals, national theaters, museums, schools, state universities, social institutions, etc. The number of employees in the public sector is around 133,000. ■

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Macedonian judicial system has undergone vast reforms since the independence of the state. Set within constitutional and legal norms, the judiciary is independent from the executive and legislative branches. Currently, Judges and Prosecutors are selected by means

of a competitive procedure based on practical and theoretical training within the **Academy of Judges and Prosecutors**. The final decision on their selection rests in the hands of the **Judicial Council** as well as the **Council of Prosecutors**. ■

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

COURTS IN THE REPUBLIC

In the court system in the country, the judicial power rests in **Primary Courts**, **Courts of Appeal**, the **Administrative Court**, the **Higher Administrative Court**, and the **Supreme Court**.

Currently, there are **27 Primary Courts** that cover the municipalities of North Macedonia, **four Courts of Appeal in larger centres** (Bitola, Skopje, Gostivar and Shtip). **The Administrative Court**, the **Higher Administrative Court** and the **Supreme Court** are in Skopje.

Generally, cases of civil law, criminal law, commercial law and labour law go through the Primary Courts, Courts of Appeal and, lastly, the

Supreme Court, as the last instance of appeal in North Macedonia, on the basis of extraordinary legal remedies.

The Administrative Court and High Administrative Court are responsible for cases of administrative disputes, which usually arise from administrative procedures.

Within the Macedonian judicial system, there is also a **Constitutional Court**. Its competencies are in the area of normative control. Essentially, it decides on the compliance of basic legislation with the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as conflicts of jurisdiction. ■

MILESTONES

1991

The country declares independence from Yugoslavia on 8th of September 1991

1991

The Assembly adopts the first Constitution on 17th of November 1991

1994

The country conducts its first Parliamentary elections as an independent state on 16th of October 1994

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

Within the judicial system, the institution of the Public Prosecutor is organized hierarchically as follows: **The Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia**, the **Higher Public Prosecutor's Office**, the **Public Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption**, and the **Basic Public Prosecutor's Office**.

The Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia covers the entire territory of the country, with headquarters in Skopje. It is led by the Public Prosecutor of the Republic of North Macedonia, who is elected by the Assembly upon proposal of the Government.

A Higher Public Prosecutor's Office covers the area of an Appellate Court, which means that there are four such Offices in the country.

The Public Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption investigates specific types of crimes and covers the

entire territory of the country, with headquarters in Skopje.

Primary Public Prosecutor's offices cover the area of one or more Primary Courts. Currently, there are 22 such offices in North Macedonia ■

→ INTERNET

Courts in the Republic

Judicial Portal of the Republic
→ sud.mk

Constitutional Court
→ ustavensud.mk

The Public Prosecutor's Office
→ jorm.gov.mk

1994

The country holds its first Presidential election as an independent state on 16th of October 1994

2001

The Ohrid Framework Agreement is signed on 13th of August 2001

2018

The Prespa Agreement is signed on 17th of June 2018

POLITICAL SKOPJE



1 Government

The government building was erected in 1970. Its facade was fully reconstructed in 2014 as part of the project „Skopje 2014“. It is located on the bank of river Vardar.



2 Villa Vodno

Villa Vodno has been the official residence of the State President since 2009. It is located in the foothills of Vodno Mountain, in the South of Skopje.



120

MPs make up the 10th composition of the Macedonian Assembly



43 %

of MPs in the Assembly are women



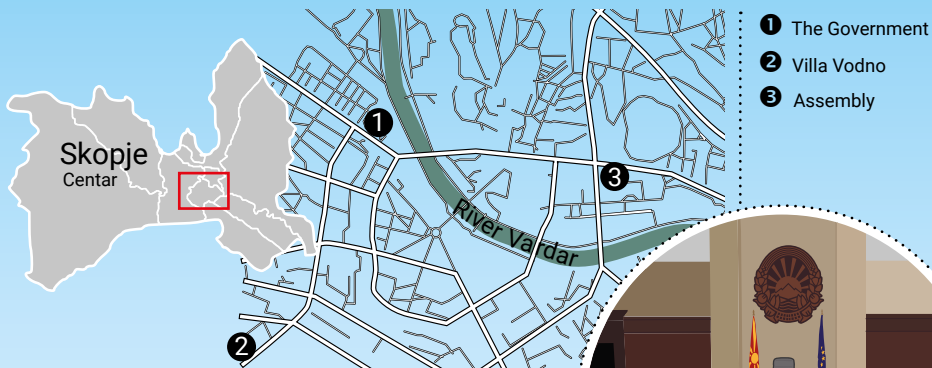
1.814.263

citizens are eligible to vote in elections



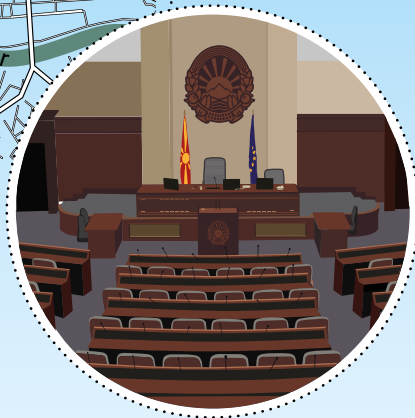
4.500

people visit the Assembly in Skopje each year



3 Assembly

The Assembly was built in 1938, based on a project designed by Czech architect Victor J. Hudak. It has the form of a pentagon, with an internal yard and a hall. From 1939, is used as an administration building. After the liberation of Skopje in 1944, it housed the entire administration of the Macedonian People's Republic. Since the independence in 1991, the building has been the seat of the Macedonian Assembly.



16
ministers from
the Government



10
coalition governments
since 1991



5
State Presidents
since 1991



10
Presidents of
the Government
since 1991

MACEDONIAN FOREIGN POLICY ON A EUROPEAN TRACK - MYTHS VS. INTERESTS

The “three Ilindens”: from the dream of autonomy to challenged sovereignty • The essence of “Great power” support • Long-lasting “Interim” solutions • Security and welfare umbrella • Threats - myths vs reality • Real and fake alternatives • Internal market and beyond • Who remains to be integrated? • Success is rather based on reforms than on membership

by Nikola Poposki

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs

The foreign policy of a nation is best defined by the **discrepancies** on its path of decisions, not by the **general outline** of national **myths**.¹ For the latter, we provide additional references. Our focus in the following text, however, will be on the discrepancies.

THE “THREE ILINDENS”: FROM THE DREAM OF AUTONOMY TO CHALLENGED SOVEREIGNTY

Three historical events illustrate the pattern of what was to become the Macedonian concept of modern statehood, which its foreign policy is derived from. All three events happened to occur in summer, the first two even on the same date (2nd of August, St. Ilya the Prophet’s day). Hence, the shining sun on the flag (or at least some type of it).

^{1st}: In 1903, in a **people’s uprising**, the ambition to establish an autonomous Macedonia was officially proclaimed: at that time, within the already crumbling Ottoman Empire. The “Kruševo Manifesto” might have looked like an expression of the Socialists’ dreams. However, it captured the aim for freedom by means of, so to say, **democrati-** ►



The state flag in the UN

- **sation.** It was brutally crushed and followed by years of violence.

The Balkan Wars and World War I followed, as did the period of competing forced migrations and assimilation across the wider region. By 1918, about everything was left to be rebuilt, whereas violence persisted. As a consequence of World War II, the Balkans were expected to be redefined. The War stimulated the resurgence of the hopes that had not been fulfilled in 1903.

2nd: In 1944, the most successful fighters against the fascists' (and their allies') domination across the region had one thing in common: **socialist ideology**. The Macedonian context fitted the rule. At the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia,² Macedonian socialists reportedly converged over the idea of self-determination and favoured the concept of a federal union with fellow nations. The ideology later appeared to be their curse, when thousands became subject to property nationalisation or forced exile, ended up in correctional camps or, in the worst case, died,³ some of them because they were perceived as **too ideological** (e.g., even preferring Stalin over Tito), others as **not being ideological enough** (e.g. valuing their national or individual interests or liberties more than the supranational socialist mainstream). Either way, the road to hell was shortened for disobedience, even if it was reasoned.

The "Srem vs Solun"⁴ dilemma was present at that time. As historians would record it, each nation in the region had its proxy.⁵ After World War II, the lack of anticipation that the borders would be fine-tuned by the Allies, who did not like considerable disturbances,

would be paid for at a later stage.

3rd: In 1991, the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) went hand in hand with growing aspirations for independence. The Macedonian path toward independence was unique:

It remained the **only former Yugoslav Republic not to be involved in a bloody secession conflict**.

It conducted a referendum for independence from Yugoslavia which, **in a unique manner, left open the option to join a renewed federation** at a later stage. The move was justified as an attempt to appease worried ethnic communities and/or hawkish leaders in the neighbourhood.

The Socialist Republic of Macedonia at that time was the only Republic that was considered fit for independence by European Community (EC) experts, but disregarded by the EC Council at the same time. The special EC commission on Yugoslavia was led by top constitutional experts from Member States⁶ and offered opinions on statehood and succession. It concluded that both Socialist Republics of Slovenia and of Macedonia were the only ones clearly ready to be recognised as independent states at that stage, while others still had to fulfil some preconditions. The EC Member States acted politically by following the recommendation on the former, while refusing to do so in the latter case.

Thus, the first lesson in international law for then freshly independent Republic of Macedonia was rather rough: when the **rule of law** and the "**rule of the jungle**" (real politics) are in collision, **the latter tends to prevail.** ■



President Kiro Gligorov declares the independence of the country after the successful referendum held on 8th of September 1991.

THE ESSENCE OF “GREAT POWER” SUPPORT

The 1903 insurrection was not the only one in the region. The emerging Balkan nations had seen armed uprisings against the Ottoman Empire for many years. However, the successful ones included an element that the Macedonian insurgency in 1903 was obviously lacking: substantial support from at least some of the Great Powers of that time (the British, Russian, French, and Austro-Hungarian Empires, and later Germany and Italy). In some views, the Serb, Montenegrin, Greek, Romanian, and Bulgarian insurgencies were accompanied by rival Empires' backing against the Ottomans in a way that determined their outcome.⁷ As for the 1903 Macedonian insurgency, the attention of rival Empires could be partially attracted only after it had been crushed and revenge raids affected local populations, provoking considerable migration flows. Hence, it was followed by at least a decade of extended suffering.⁸

As World War II was reaching its end, some

Macedonian partisans were more attracted to the national (rather than the ideological) component of the after-war, as were others in the neighbourhood. All of them missed to note that ideological borders had already been fixed. In absence of consideration for such circumstances, anti-communist treatments at the time were quite radical (sometimes, they are said to have included bombing raids, forced migration, executions or incarcerations in labour camps).⁹

For many citizens, the independence referendum in 1991 completed the long way to freedom. The achievement was peaceful and legal. Still, Macedonian citizens were left to discover the true meaning of real politics. In substance: UN accession was frozen, the EC imposed a ban on the name, and a trade embargo was imposed by Greece, the only neighbour whose ports were the first choice to ship from and to a landlocked country at a reasonable cost. ■

LONG-LASTING “INTERIM” SOLUTIONS

This situation was set to last, at least until it became absurd. However, the bloodshed in the other parts of the former SFRY imposed the need for action. The solution included Security Council resolutions (817 & 845), a new flag, a so-called temporary reference instead of a constitutional name of the country for UN purposes, followed by an asymmetric Interim Agreement with Greece.

The long process of moving from attempted autonomy to independence went through phases of compromised sovereignty and unprecedented acceptance of unilateral concessions. On one hand, it was meant to be only temporary. On the other, it provided justification for an extended list of further unprecedented concessions. Some Greeks¹⁰ point out that, since the young Republic voluntarily applied for UN membership as Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and this was accepted by the UN, it is clear that the Greek stance on the name issue

was legitimate. From that perspective, the Macedonian argument about the name of a country belonging to its sovereign rights has suffered the toughest hit from its own ranks. Thus, what should have been temporary became permanent, and bilateral talks under UN auspices about the name dispute were introduced as a permanent instrument.¹¹

Many governments have elapsed ever since, and many different approaches have been tested. With the sole exception of the persistent UN mediator, Matthew Nimetz, pretty much everything else has changed. Macedonian-Greek relations flourished through investments, trade, tourism, banking, even the migration crisis... In parallel, cross-border contacts between citizens of both countries grew exponentially. The sky became the limit for cooperation, provided the identity issue was left aside. The price was no NATO or EU membership. Part of the Greek rationale behind this was that once the young Republic would be

MILESTONES

1993

The country becomes a member of the United Nations on 8th of April 1993

1995

The country becomes a member of the OSCE on 12th of October 1995

1995

The country becomes a member of the Council of Europe on 9th of November 1995

stabilised and positioned in the club, unilateral concessions might come to an end. In private, a fraction of the decision-makers was convinced that Turkey might use the territory vacuum as an additional platform of destabilisation regarding Greece. Perhaps none of this is well funded, but a number of Greek politicians have consistently reminded that the name issue will be solved either by Macedonians aligning with all the Greek claims or by being dissolved (if failing to do so). For some Greeks, this sounded radical, but it made others reflect on how comforting the alternative of “Great Albania” and/or „Great Bulgaria” would be for Hellenism.

We all tend to agree on one point: **myths still seem to dominate over rational understanding of a common security concept for Balkan nations.** As a counterbalance, Americans and Germans at least appeared constantly reminding that tax-payers` interests might matter more than the relation to antiquity, across national borders.

Two decades after the Interim Agreement, Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)¹² were relaunched on a purely bilateral basis. In a unique manner, the President, the Parliament, and even the Ministry of Interior in Athens opened the gates to Macedonian official presence. The Macedonian language was publically spoken in the Foreign Ministry, too.

The apparent openness in Athens later met a new government in Skopje, whose polarising Prime Minister Zoran Zaev has been largely perceived as a “name deal-breaker”. His supporters qualify previous cabinets as antiquity builders, while he responded by renaming the main Macedonian airport and motorway which had been named after Alexander the Great. Many disagree at home. “One day he could win the case before the Court of history for the merits of his efforts”, claim his supporters. His opponents, on the other hand, believe that he will only have to turn up in the Court of justice related to municipality charges. ■

1995

The country enters the Partnership for Peace with NATO on 19th of November 1995

1999

The country begins the Membership Action Plan (MAP) Process with NATO on 19th of April 1999

BLURED LINES

One referendum¹³ and two votes in Parliament¹⁴ later the deal was sealed. Symbolically, the plan to change the name of the Republic of Macedonia to North Macedonia has been celebrated in the greek province of Western Macedonia, on the shores of a shared lake. Critics emphasise that the settlement was done at the expense of democracy and the rule of law. The referendum failed to secure the constitutionally required census¹⁵, while votes in Parliament have been traded against selective amnesty¹⁶. Supporters on the other hand conclude that it settled two objectives in a single shot: NATO's enlargement ambitions and one of the two Macedonian strategic objectives. On the ballance, the South can claim victory on most points of the dispute, while the North can celebrate its physical (if not spiritual) survival. The domestic public opinion remains sharply divided about the new nordic denomination of the country. Observers agree however that Great powers from the West and the East, one way or another, have all converged towards endorsing it¹⁷. As did, one way or

another, almost all political parties.

The experience is traumatic as EU membership, being the most critical part of the collective ambitions and the ultimate nation's unifying factor, remains only a distant wish. European decision-making track-record hangs the accession date probably some 10 to 15 years away. Moreover, EU enlargement dynamic seems unaffected by the traumatic change of the name. More Governments would eclipse before membership is achieved. In the mean time, the option of individual integration for skilled Macedonians in richer EU Member States seems more realistic.

Migration has been and will be happening. The ultimate challenge would be to offer a sizable portion of the competitive ones who left, the opportunity to come back at a later stage and help spread Europe in the Balkans, rather than filling-in labor gaps in the North of the continent. ■

2001

The country signs the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU on 9th of April 2001

2005

The country receives EU candidate status on 16th of December 2005

2009

The European Commission, for the first time, recommends to start accession negotiations on 10th of October 2009

THREATS - MYTHS VS REALITY

The mainstream Macedonian political elite, across the board, views NATO as the Holy Grail of security, territorial integrity and statehood. The population is clearly less religious about it, but still convinced of its usefulness.¹⁸ Membership support has dropped from some incredible +90% to more realistic +70%. More importantly, it is viewed as a binding element for a small, but colourful nation.

In theory, **Article 5**¹⁹ stipulates that an attack on one NATO member state is considered as being directed against the Alliance as a whole. Once, Nimitz-class carriers and ballistic missiles constituted an attractive insurance policy against a tanks-led invasion. Today, neither the threat nor the insurance are the same. In practice, nations can be shattered without a single tank or fighter-jet crossing a border line.

Also, Alliance members might have dramatically different views about the **scale** or the **context** of a **threat**, especially once it happens. Some might decide to dispatch any kind of required support to

a threatened member state, others simply to pull out their manpower and equipment from a conflict zone. Reasons can vary from policy disagreements to public pressure back home.

It can be perceived that a threat in a member state comes from another member state, no matter that this might be an inaccurate evaluation of the threats. Even in democracy, misperceptions can shape decision-making.

Luckily, Macedonian rationale tends to be simple: our neighbours are either in NATO²⁰ or NATO is in them.²¹ Either way, even unallied-minded Serbia is advancing on the path of the "Partnership for Peace",²² a NATO-led program. Therefore, the Republic's **security priorities are almost entirely shared with those of the neighbours.**

Today, radicalised individuals and groups that operate on a cross-border basis constitute a primary source of concern. Many have gained experience in the past Balkan or Middle East

2009

The country is granted visa liberalization with the European Union on 19th of December 2009

2018

The Prespa Agreement is signed (agreement on resolving the name dispute with Greece) on 17th of June 2018

conflicts. They represent the same kind of threat in North-Western Europe as they do on the Balkan peninsula. The only way to counter them is through efficient cooperation mechanisms between states. This also goes for **cyber** and **hybrid threats**. Today, NATO is probably still the most efficient system to enable security cooperation in the region.

Additionally, the membership has proved to have beneficial side effects on the **investment**

climate, which is perhaps only due to the expectation of a more predictable environment.

Last but not least, NATO membership is believed to have possible appeasing side effects on **social cohesion**. This can be critically important in societies suffering from segregation (on cultural, religious, or ethnic grounds) or compromised national cohesion. However, this might merely mean to treat the symptoms rather than the causes of the problem. ■

REAL AND FAKE ALTERNATIVES

The most fragile argument for NATO membership is “there is no alternative”. Scientifically, it will not prevail. Clearly, there are always alternatives. The fact is that the American security umbrella provides the best marketable insurance policy in the wider region.

It might not always be directly linked to full NATO membership, though. Sweden and Austria, for example, are declared neutral countries, while Turkey provides the second biggest military manpower in the Alliance. Those countries have, by all standards, different status in respect to potential external threats to their sovereignty and territorial integrity. In practice, public opinion in some NATO member states might be more inclined to intervene in favour of the

former rather than the latter.

Macedonian alternatives are not given in terms of “choosing a club”. Instead, they are about taking different shapes of strategic relationship, all following the very same **pillars of national security**:

1. Relations with neighbors
2. Internal integration capacity
3. American security umbrella
4. EU framework for economic prosperity

Obviously, the pillars are **interdependent**. Also, they are likely to remain fundamental, even when NATO and EU membership are to become reality. ■

THE EU WELFARE DREAM

The goal of EU membership is what really unites Macedonians. The most successful peace project in Europe is not inspired by military might, but focuses on **economic welfare** founded around a quasi-religious belief in a jointly agreed **set of rules**. For most Macedonian citizens, the leading EU nations are **role models**.

Obviously, they are not naive about the imperfections (to say the least) of the bureaucratic machinery and challenged democratic rep-

resentation of institutions. Still, the EU is the most efficient and fairest of the known beasts that can deliver overall benefit to its citizens at today's level of sophistication.

Over time, the disappointments that followed numerous failed attempts to start accession talks, as well as the irrational disappearance of the Macedonian language or national identification from documents of the European Commission have taken a heavy toll, while spreading bitterness to many Macedonians' hearts. ■

INTERNAL MARKET AND BEYOND

Macedonian economy is very open, and 90% of the trade is with the EU or its (potential) candidates. Germany alone absorbs nearly half of the exports. Therefore, integration in the internal market is a logical choice. However, the steep road to membership is dominated by reaching standards related to the rule of law rather than trade practices.

Painful integration experiences in the past have raised the accession bar. It is more difficult than ever to convince German or French tax-payers that integrating the Balkans into the EU is not merely going to bring trouble. To some, it might appear that stabilising the south-eastern part of the continent and develop new market opportunities there is not worth the effort.

The highest risk for the process is that, if it remains as **vague and lengthy**,²³ there might be

too few people left in the Balkans to be integrated, as many more might opt to **vote with their feet** and simply move to the more competitive parts of the Union.

As a matter of fact, most young people in the Balkans perceive EU membership as a fast-track job opportunity in richer Member States. However, this is obviously a misperception, since less EU citizens are enthusiastic about enlargement now than at any moment since the great stretch eastwards in 2004.

Critically, European integration was never driven by democratic tendencies, but rather by an elitist vision of a better tomorrow. The average Frenchman was not more enthusiastic about the accession of Great Britain back in the 1960's than he would be about the Balkans now. Still, the former happened a few years later, as the latter, one day, might do as well. ►

► Arguably, the “Balkan 6” might remain in the Union even longer than the UK, as they have experienced a (much harder) “exit” from a Common market, only a couple of decades ago. The lessons learned have left some marks in the collective memory which go well beyond migration and the loss of market opportunities.

The biggest challenge of this generation is to keep at home a larger fraction of its most competitive citizens. Migration is certain to continue, whatsoever. But for a small nation, having in mind the traumas of Bulgaria, Romania and, more recently, Croatia, who see young skilled people massively leaving their country, this is probably the ultimate challenge. ■

WHO REMAINS TO BE INTEGRATED?

The most efficient way of making a prosperous country in the 21st century Europe is to genuinely apply the **guiding principles** of (liberal) **democracy, rule of law, and free market**. Fulfilling these dreams might take the path of Euro-Atlantic integration.

The implementation of the principles is more important than the actual membership in the clubs. As this is what makes the most obvious difference between a **prosperous democracy with competitive economy** and a **struggling entity dependent on foreign assistance**.

The difference between both extreme scenarios considerably depends on the **quality of our reforms** today. This will also play an important role regarding how many of the brightest and smartest graduates will decide not to move to places where their skills are more appreciated. Failing in this effort, on the other hand, could

make much of the arduously achieved Macedonian statehood irrelevant.

While observing the trends, one can legitimately ask what could prevent the competitive ones from leaving the underdeveloped Balkans for Northern Europe or the USA. Some arguments in favour of the Macedonian “remain” campaign could be better preserved **traditional values** and a **less stressful lifestyle** (at least for the intellectual upper and middle class), and the enthusiasm about contributing to a **pioneering effort to anchor a nation** in the 21st century and beyond.

In essence, attracting **competitive companies with high technology to invest in the country is probably the ultimate challenge for its foreign policy in the 21st century**. Without it, “keeping the brains” will be a much harder mission. ■



SUCCESS IS RATHER BASED ON REFORMS THAN ON MEMBERSHIP

Observing the local feeling of injustice, a friendly diplomat once offered consolation about Macedonian inconclusive persistence on the ICJ court ruling to be implemented: *“since you decided to be small, you better run fast”*. In summary, international rule of law has limits. “Great power support” in different forms mattered in 1903, 1944, 1991, and it matters in 2018, especially for small and polarised na-

tions. Survival instincts tend to prevail over trust in legal instruments. Still, being right on principles certainly helps.

Ultimately, the welfare of people in a country depends on **how unified** and **well organised** the society is. **“Quality over speed”** is probably the most useful advice on reforms ever received from partners in the last two decades. ■

BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

Doing business in North Macedonia • Taxes • The Macedonian economy

by Robert Janev

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Office in Skopje

Free market, entrepreneurship and legal protection of property rights are fundamental values of the Constitutional order in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Involvement in economic activity is affected by the legislative framework of doing business and country's economy. In this chapter we will give brief overview of both aspects

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Investors' rights to own private property are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia. In accordance to this, no person can be deprived of their property or any of the rights which derive from it. Foreign investors have the legal possibility to obtain property rights for buildings and for other real estate to be used for their business activities and full ownership of property rights through locally registered companies.

The **Law on Trade Companies** (Company Law) governs the formation, operation, transformation and termination of companies in the Republic of North Macedonia. This is the primary legal act which regulates businesses activity. It defines the types of companies as well as the procedures and regulations for their establishment and operations. Foreign investors are granted the same rights and privileges as Macedonian companies and are



Opening Bell at the Macedonian Stock Exchange

not subject to extraordinary approvals (unless otherwise stipulated by an international agreement and/or by law regulating special types of foreign companies and foreign sole proprietors with specific scope of operations).

Under the Company Law, trade companies are formed as separate legal entities that operate independently and are distinct from their founders, shareholders and managers. Depending on the type, companies have their own rights, liabilities, names and registered offices. The law defines five forms of companies: 1. Public Trade Company (also known as General Partnerships); 2. Limited Partnerships; 3. Limited Liability Company; 4. Joint-Stock Company; and, 5. Limited Partnerships by Shares

The **Macedonian Stock Exchange (MSE)** is the first institutionalized central market place for securities trading. Its establishment made it possible for portfolio investments to be regulated. Trading in securities is done through brokerage houses and banks who are members of the MSE. The Securities and Exchange Commission act as a regulator in this field that follows the legality of trading and issues permits for corporate take-overs.

The **Central Register** is the single institution for registering all types of trade companies, foreign representative offices and other entities. Registration is conducted electronically with the help of the registration agent on the E-registration portal of the Central Registry.

One Stop Shop System which allows for investors to register their businesses within four hours after submitting on application is implemented as well. It is possible to register a company in North Macedonia by one office, obtaining the information from a single counter and addressing a single employee. This significantly reduces administrative barriers and start-up costs.

In addition to the business registration as foreseen by the Company Law, certain specific business activities are subject to obtaining additional working licenses or permits. For such companies, the registration process is followed by a licensing process under the competencies of relevant authorities covering the matter of licenses and/or permits.

Technological-Industrial Development Zones (TIDZs – Free Economic Zones) are centers in which highly productive clean manufacturing activities are concentrated and new technologies are developed through an application of the highest environmental standards. There are currently fifteen operational TIDZs – Free Economic Zones in North Macedonia: three in Skopje, one in Tetovo, Kichevo, Struga, Prilep, Rankovce, Stip, Vinica, Delcevo, Berovo, Radovish, Strumica, and Gevgelija respectively.

North Macedonia offers additional incentives for development in the TIDZs, in addition to those normally associated with free

economic zones. Investors in TIDZs have the right to personal and corporate income tax exemption for the first 10 years, and are also exempt from payment of value added tax and customs duties for goods, raw materials, equipment, and machines. Furthermore, up to €500.000 can be granted as an incentive towards building costs, depending on the value of the investment and the number of employees. There are also additional tax deductions for employee benefits.

Other benefits include a completed infrastructure that enables free connection to natural gas, water, electricity and access to a main international road network. Investors are also exempt from paying a fee for the preparation of the construction site. The TIDZs provide fast procedures for business activity registration that further reduce the costs of setting up. The land in TIDZ may be leased at attractive concessionary rates to foreign investors for a period of up to 99 years.

The Government pays specific attention to production activities, activities within the IT sector, scientific research activities and new technologies with high environmental standards, which additional benefits are foreseen for within the TIDZs. ■

→ INTERNET

Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia

Constitution

→ sobranie.mk

Ministry of Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia

Regulation, Laws, Company Law

→ economy.gov.mk

National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia

Basic economic data and Residential Real Estate Prices

→ nbrm.mk

Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia

Indicators and Projections

→ finance.gov.mk

Agency for Foreign Investments and Export Promotion of the Republic of North Macedonia

Info materials, Brochures

→ investinmacedonia.com

State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia

Foreign Trade, External Trade volume

→ stat.gov.mk



Steelmaking

TAXES

North Macedonia have reorganized its tax system significantly in 2008 with the purpose to encourage investment, accelerate business development, and increase overall living standard in the country. Flat tax rate of 10% on corporate and personal income tax of 10%-18%* stimulate successful companies to advance operations and profitability. Macedonian legislation

provides numerous exemptions for business and individual income, especially in the field of high-tech industry.

The relevant institution for the implementation of tax policy and legislation is the **Public Revenue Office**, which has an established system for electronic oversight of the profits of trade companies. ■

TYPE OF TAX	TAX RATE
Personal Income Tax	10%-18%*
Value Added Tax (VAT)	General Rate: 18% ; Preferential Rate: 5%**
Corporate Income Tax	10%
Property Tax	0.1% - 0.2%
Inheritance and Gift Tax	2-3%; 4-5%***
Sales Tax on Real Estate	2-4%

* Personal income tax rate of 18% will be applied to the portion of the tax base exceeding MKD 90.000 per month (1.080.000 MKD a year). The amount up to 90.000 MKD per month will continue to be taxed with 10%. Effectively, the tax reform introduces an additional tax bracket taxed with extra 8% for the part of the income exceeding 90.000 MKD per month. The Government introduced a Legal provision to freeze progressive personal income taxation until 2023, therefore only a flat rate of 10% remains applicable.

** includes computer software and hardware and others.

*** 2-3% for the tax payer in the 2nd order of succession and 4-5% for the tax payer in the 3rd order of succession not related to the testator

ECONOMY

North Macedonia's GDP has been expanding at a moderate pace for the past five years, driven by private and public consumption. The growth of its GDP is subject to economic developments in Europe due to strong banking and trade ties. The country maintains low inflation rate at around < 2 % on average in the past 10 years. North Macedonia practices good fiscal discipline and well-functioning coordination between fiscal and monetary policy. The following key data should be mentioned:

1. North Macedonia maintains low debt to GDP ratio accounting for 49% of its GDP;
2. Low inflation rate is being kept over the past years;
3. Credit rating of BB- with a stable outlook by Standard and Poor's and BB+ with stable outlook by Fitch;
4. Stable currency pledged to the Euro; one Euro equals 61.7 Macedonian Denars.

Trade is essential to the Macedonian economy, as a result of the fact that the value of exports and imports taken together equals around 133% of the GDP. North Macedonia has signed free trade agreements with the EU, EFTA and CEFTA countries as well as Turkey and Ukraine. These provide access to over 650 million consumers. The country was officially admitted to the World Trade Organization in 2003. North Macedonia's most important trading partners are Germany, United Kingdom, Greece, Serbia and Italy.

The financial sector has become much more dynamic as a result of a rise in competition in the banking sector. Namely, the foreign pres-

ence accounts for more than 80% of banking-sector assets.

Special incentives for attracting foreign direct investments (FDI) in the country proved to be quite successful in the run-up to the political crises since 2015 until nowadays. Namely, between 2006 and 2015, the nation noted an inflow of foreign capital equal to 2.6 billion Euro, or on average of around 262 million Euro annually. This is 2.5 times more than in the period between 1993 and 2005, when the nation saw an average inflow of 108 million Euro annually. In the period after 2015 the FDI continued to count a total inflow of 1.4 billion in solely four years period. NATO membership and the official start of the negotiation with the EU is expected to bring positive economic growth and significant inflow of FDI in the country.

The country primarily depends on its economic activity in the service sector, but as a result of the vast increase in foreign direct investments in the TIDZs, automotive parts manufacturing is supporting the diversification of the economy. Key real industries are food processing, textile production, chemicals, iron and steel.

The GDP of North Macedonia was 11.3 Billion Euros in 2019. GDP real growth is projected to 3.8% in 2020. The unemployment rate is slightly more than 17 %.

The key institution for creating and following the macro-economic policy is the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia (The Central Bank). ■

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT

Climate change • Energy • Waste • Air quality • Water • Biodiversity

by Antonio Jovanovski & Kristina Prilepchanska

Go Green - Environmental Youth Organization

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Republic of North Macedonia is particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. Water resources are especially sensitive with regard to both quantity and quality. Overall water availability is expected to decrease by 18% until 2100. Consequently, the negative effect of climate change on agriculture will be increasing. The agricultural sector as a whole is expected to be exposed to prolonged heat waves, rapid temperature changes, severe droughts and floods. By 2050, apple yields are expected to decrease by 50% and tomato yields by 81%.

Greenhouse gas emissions originate primarily from the energy sector (73%), followed by agriculture (13%), waste (7%) and industry (7%). Transport is considered to be part of the energy sector, and it is the most progressing category when it comes to GHG emissions. The land use and forestry sector

accounts for 3 to 10% of emissions, depending on the amount of forest fires, conversion of land and management of soil (fertilizers etc.).

An average citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia emits 30% fewer emissions than an average citizen in the EU-28, or approximately the same as an average citizen in Romania or Hungary. However, the total amount of energy required to produce a unit of GDP in Macedonia is around four times higher than the average in European developed countries.

The Republic of North Macedonia is a non-Annex 1 country of the UN Convention on Climate Change (developing country), but at the same time, it is a candidate country for EU accession, which is why it has to follow the European Climate and Energy Policy. ►



Kozjak Lake, a nature paradise near Skopje



Wind park "Bogdanci"

- ▶ The country has signed the Paris Agreement, and with its ratification in the Assembly, it has officially committed itself to reduce its CO₂ emissions by 30% (or 36%, in the more ambitious scenario) by 2030 (with 1990 taken as the baseline). Interventions are planned in the sectors of energy supply, buildings and transport, which account for about 80% of CO₂ emissions. With the adoption of the new Energy Strategy 2040, the National Determined Contribution is expected to increase before the next COP in Glasgow.

The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning has launched the process of draft-

ing a *Long Term Strategy* as well as a *Law on Climate Action*, which should be the essential policy documents on climate. The Strategy and the Law are expected to be completed by the end of 2020.

North Macedonia is the only country in the region that has calculated the expected number of green jobs that result from achieving the climate goals. The latest biennial report on climate change highlights that at least 6,200 green jobs could be created by 2035 if energy efficiency measures in buildings and low-carbon energy supply (renewables and gas) are introduced. ■

ENERGY

In North Macedonia, electricity is mainly produced in coal and hydro power plants. The total installed capacity for energy production is 2.06 GW. In recent years, the production of energy from coal decreased to around 60% in 2017. At the same time, the total capacity of energy production from renewable energy sources (including water) has increased to 37%. In 2017, energy production from renewable sources (including water) was 25%. However, the total installed capacity for energy production from renewable sources (without water) is around 3%.

North Macedonia is relatively dependent on energy imports. Even though the electricity consumption decreased from 2010 to 2016, the average share of imported electricity is still around 30% of the total energy consumption, one of the highest import shares in the region. The country usually imports energy from Kosovo and Bulgaria, but also exports it, mainly to Greece. North Macedonia is pretty active in the cross-border energy exchange. In 2016, the country was a founding member of the Coordinated Auction Office in South East Europe (SEE CAO).

North Macedonia has a relatively well developed transmission network with 5 interconnection points. The total transmission network stretches out over 577 km for 440kV and 1.601 km for 110kV. The loss in energy transmission is comparably high, and the network needs renewal and revitalisation. The interconnectivity

transmission line with Albania will contribute to the process of revitalising the transmission network.

North Macedonia does not possess sources of natural gas and is completely dependent on imports. It uses the Bulgarian gas pipeline to import natural gas, which covers 7% of the primary energy consumption (2017). However, the Government has an ambitious plan for gasification of the country, notwithstanding serious warnings of environmental NGOs and climate activists. "Investments should be focused on utilizing the potential of solar energy, which is over 1 GW" is the main message of the environmental NGOs.

Important developments in the energy sector started with the adoption of the new Energy Law in May 2018 and the Energy Strategy that outlines the vision of the energy sector by 2040. The Energy Law initiated the process of decentralising the energy sector, so that new legal entities (companies) and households would be able to produce energy. The new Energy Strategy features six strategic objectives to be achieved by 2040: 1. maximise energy efficiency, 2. maintain the energy dependence of import on the current level and contribute to the integration of the European electricity market, 3. limit the greenhouse gas emissions, 4. increase the share of renewable energy in the energy consumption, 5. minimise the costs of the system, and 6. continue the transposition of EU law and its implementation. ■

WASTE

Waste is one of the most considerable environmental problems in North Macedonia. About 376 kg per capita, or a total of 796,585 tons of communal waste are generated annually. The total quantity of collected municipal waste amounts to 610,227 tons. The difference between the waste that is generated and the waste that is collected ends up in hundreds of illegal dumpsites, scattered throughout the environment.

There are 54 municipal substandard landfills that do not meet the criteria. According to the assessment of the risk they pose to the environment, one third of the landfills has been assigned the highest risk category, which means that they should be closed or remediated. Only the Skopje landfill “Drisla” meets specific minimal standards. It possesses the only incinerator for medical waste and hence needs significant infrastructure and technological improvements, according to the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) standards.

According to the Waste Management Strategy (2008-2020), a regional waste management approach needs to be introduced for building modern sanitary landfills. The most advanced process for building a modern regional landfill, supported with European funds, is located in the North East and East region (expected 2021). The establishment of this landfill would lead to the shutdown of 16 substandard landfills and 107 illegal dumpsites in these two regions. The

other regions (Vardar, Pelagonia, South, South East, South West) can provide the necessary documentation and feasibility studies, but no projects are implemented. Besides the lack of funds, there is active resistance from the local population to “host” a regional landfill, hence determining a location for the regional landfills remains a challenge. With support from the Swiss Government, the Polog region has reached an advanced stage in establishing its own regional landfill, however, the preparation of documentation and feasibility studies is still an ongoing process.

The system works based on the EPR (extended producer responsibility) scheme, according to which producers pay a fee to collective scheme companies that, in turn, finance and organise waste collection and recycling. However, the percentage of primary selection remains low, which results in a low percentage of recycling and other forms of processing. Waste from packaging has a high economic value, and it accounts for 15% to 22% of the total municipal waste. On average, every citizen generates about 50 kg of packaging waste annually, amounting to a total of about 115,000 tons.

Valuable secondary resources, such as waste packaging, are often collected from the containers by informal waste pickers. According to reports, between 70 and 90 per cent of recycled plastic, cardboard paper, and iron was collected by informal pickers. A process of formalisation



Sculpture of a dinosaur made of recycled iron in the Skopje zoo

of the waste pickers has been initiated by civil society organisations. The idea is to create the new occupation “waste picker and handler”. With an educational curriculum, the waste pickers would be licensed and hired for the collection of sorted waste from buildings, companies and households. A social enterprise would serve the purpose of licensing, organisation and em-

ployment of the waste pickers.

North Macedonia has officially banned waste imports for burning and the production of energy. The ban was installed as a result of public protests against air pollution and incinerators, which led to an Assembly vote on the Waste Law (February 2020). ■

AIR QUALITY

Several times a year, especially in winter, the air in some cities of North Macedonia is the most polluted worldwide. According to the World Bank's report on Green Growth, North Macedonia is the most air-polluted country in Europe, and fifth when it comes to annual deaths caused by polluted air, i.e. PM10 particles. According to the World Bank's report, solid particles are responsible for 1.350 deaths per year, as well as thousands of lost working days, which leads to an annual economic cost of 253 million Euro, or 3,2% of the GDP.

The energy system based on fossil fuels is the biggest contributor to the air pollution, such as the thermal power plant in Bitola, which burns lignite. Its annual emissions are estimated at about 80.000 tons of SO₂, 11.000 tons of NO_x and 11.000 tons of total suspended particles/powders, which is especially harmful for the citizens of Bitola and Novaci.

Another significant contributor to air pollution in most Macedonian cities is household heating. Since many citizens cannot pay their electricity bills, they are forced to find alternative ways to heat their homes, so that apart from wood, coal and pellets, they burn furniture, plastics and other materials in order to cope with the low temperatures. This is a social issue which local and national authorities are trying to tackle by subsidising pellets and pellet stoves. They are also planning to subsidise solar panels and build a gas

distribution network for heating in larger cities.

Transport is a smaller but important source of air pollution, especially in Skopje. A decision by the Government in 2009 allowed imports and reduced the excise for used (old) vehicles (Euro 0). Thus, more than 170.000 old cars were imported between 2009 and 2015, while only 15.000 old cars had been imported between 2004 and 2009. Due to rising pollution problems and continuous public pressure by NGOs, the Government changed the regulation in 2014, so that only Euro 4 standard old vehicles can be imported.

Air quality is also affected by small industrial enterprises that obtain licenses from the municipalities and work overnight, when monitoring and inspection are at the lowest level. Construction and urbanisation projects in the cities lead to reduced greenery and thus an increase of the problem. The pollution from the waste sector is a further factor, especially from sub-standard landfills and from informal waste burning for heating open-air temporary living settlements.

The Government has declared air pollution a strategic priority and created a "Plan for clean air", allocating 1.5 million euro in 2019. Numerous citizens' initiatives and protests demand more serious investments and a systematic approach to solving the problem of air pollution. ■

WATER

There is no sufficient data on the quality and quantity of groundwater, as the groundwater monitoring network is not operational. The main reason is the lack of financial and human resources.

The national Hydrometeorological Service mainly focuses on the rivers. However, only twenty riverine sampling points are monitored regularly, most of which are located on the river Vardar. The national legislation, which is harmonised with European law, requires all rivers and lakes to uphold a good ecological status, however even the limited monitoring that takes place does not fully comply with the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive. The most important source of river pollution are the untreated communal and industrial wastewater discharges, as well as the agricultural runoff. Based on the scarce physico-chemical data, the water quality of the rivers fluctuates, with some reaches carrying water of the I/II category (according to the Decree on the Classification of Water) and others, especially near settlements, showing signs of eutrophication. Only about 12.5% of the rivers have good water quality. The hydromorphological status of most rivers is satisfactory, i.e. they have not been degraded and have a good potential to achieve a good ecological status, provided the water quality is improved. The hydropower programme, according to which 400 locations fulfill the conditions for the construction of small hydropower plants at, could further worsen the ecological status of the rivers.

At the moment, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning is establishing River Basin Management Councils for the three major river basins: Vardar, Black Drim and Strumica. The River Basin Management Plans have been drafted, however they have not yet been adopted, due to the lack of finances to convey strategic environmental assessments.

All three natural tectonic lakes are under strong anthropogenic influence. The ecological status of Lake Dojran is likely the worst, as the lake is presently characterized as hyper-eutrophic. According to most parameters, it falls into the worst category, class "V". The lake is currently experiencing long-lasting and massive harmful algal blooms that cause huge ecological problems such as anoxia. They also present a threat to human health and the local economy. At the moment, the first Protected Area Management Plan is being developed for Lake Dojran, which, if implemented accordingly, could lead to an improvement to the lake's condition. Lake Prespa is a meso-eutrophic lake, polluted by agricultural runoff and under the threat of water depletion. The current Management Plan is under revision. The biodiversity and the entire ecosystem of Lake Ohrid have been under huge pressure in the past years, largely due to the unregulated coastal development, a lack of treatment of solid waste and wastewater, the lack of overall management, invasive species, illegal fishing, and eutrophication. Therefore, UNESCO has recommended for Lake Ohrid to be removed from the list of World Heritage sites and be inscribed as a "World Her-

itage in danger” unless protection actions are undertaken by February 2020. The Government adopted the Lake Ohrid Management Plan after receiving harsh criticism from the scientific and civil society with regard to numerous irregularities and problematic issues. The Lake Ohrid Watershed Management Plan is also available as a draft version, awaiting finalisation.

A large percentage of the bathing water in the country is of poor quality, especially regarding the physico-chemical parameters. The main

causes are the direct discharge of untreated or partially treated wastewater, as well as the inflow of riverine water of unsatisfactory quality. Most of the drinking water is of good quality and compliant with European and international norms.

The wastewater treatment capacity is insufficient (25 wastewater treatment plants that cover only 24.5 % of the required capacity), and some of the largest cities still discharge all sewage untreated into the nearby rivers.

BIODIVERSITY

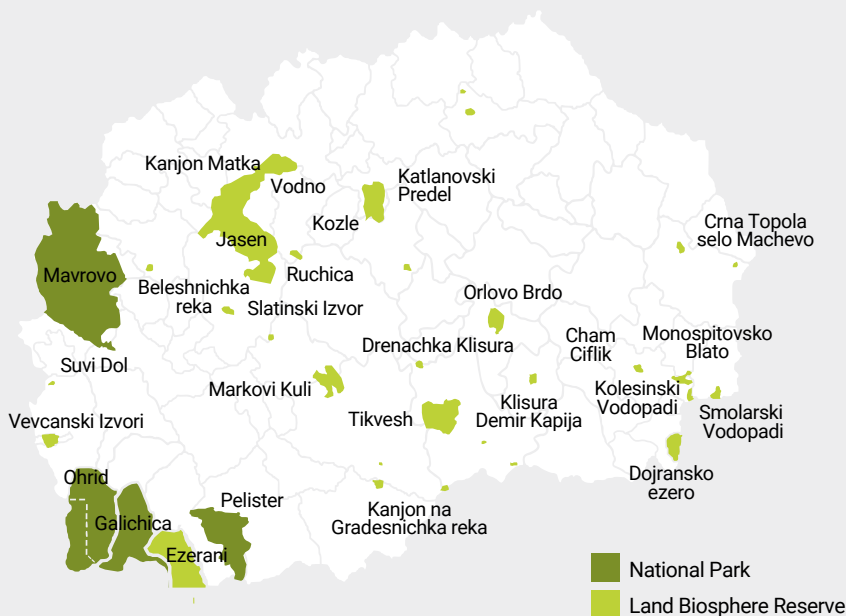
The richness in species and the level of endemism explain the country's importance as a “hotspot” for biodiversity in Europe. To date, over 16.000 species have been recorded in

North Macedonia, including 854 endemics. The centres of endemism are the natural lakes (Ohrid and Prespa in particular) and the high mountainous areas. The Balkan lynx is a sub-



The Balkan lynx in the Mavrovo National Park

M A P Biosphere reserves and national parks in North Macedonia



species of the Eurasian lynx, and it is considered to be the largest cat in the Balkans. The lynx is a national symbol in the Republic of North Macedonia (it is depicted on the Macedonian five Denar coin). The lynx lives in the Mavrovo National Park.

There are 86 protected areas with a total area of 230,083 hectares, or about 8,9% of the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. National parks account for about 4,5% of the territory of the country, followed by monuments of nature with 3,0%, while all other categories of protected areas account for about 1,4%. According to a study on the protection of natural heritage for the period until 2020, an increase in the percentage of protected areas from the current 8,9% to 11,5% is expected. Environmental NGOs advocate for the natural lakes (Ohrid, Prespa and Dojran) and the mountains Šar planina and Galichica to become national centres for biodiversity and hence to im-

plement higher protection standards.

The “Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat” (Ramsar, 1971) includes two protected areas in North Macedonia: Lake Prespa (added 1995) and Lake Dojran (added 2007). The UNESCO World Heritage List included the Macedonian monument of nature – Lake Ohrid (1979), while the preliminary UNESCO list in 2004 included two more Macedonian monuments of nature - “Markovi Kuli” and cave “Slatinski Izvor”.

In 2019, the first Macedonian “Red book of endangered species” was published.

The most relevant legislative and strategic documents regarding biodiversity are the “Law on Environmental Protection” (Public gazette 63/16) and the “National Strategy on Environmental Protection 2017-2027”. ■

EDUCATION

Higher education, research and innovation • Primary and secondary school system

by Ivan Jovanov

Leader for Education, Activism and Development (LEAD)

HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

North Macedonia boasts a relatively high number of universities, considering its small size. The first established university was “St. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje in 1949. Ever since, another six state universities were established. The full list reads as follows:

1. “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje
2. “St. Clement of Ohrid” University in Bitola
3. “Goce Delčev” University in Štip
4. State University of Tetovo in Tetovo
5. University of Southeast Europe in Tetovo
6. University of Information Science and Technology “St. Paul the Apostle” in Ohrid
7. “Mother Teresa” University in Skopje

The country also has 20 private universities and institutions which offer undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate courses accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science.

However, Macedonian universities still have a long road ahead in their quest for high quality education, since, according to the Shanghai Ranking, the best placed university is ranked only 1568th. One of the reasons might be that the budget for education and research is constantly decreasing, currently being below the OECD average. In 2018, the budget for education was 3,7%, of the GDP, while the investments for research and development were 0,44%.

Meanwhile, higher education institutions have the opportunity to use the Erasmus+

programme to partner with European universities and implement joint projects in the area of innovation and research, thus contributing to a greater internationalisation of higher education, inasmuch as an increasing number of students is attending a semester in partners universities across Europe.

The rate of student enrolment is relatively high. In 2018/2019 alone, 53 677 students enrolled in Universities, which is more than 75% of the persons who finished high-school in that year. In the last ten years, the increase of students who are interested in the so-called technical sciences has been evident. Some of the most popular degrees are those ones offered by the Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering (FINKI), a branch that is growing extremely fast and attracts a large number of students.

In its efforts for better education, in 2010 the Government of North Macedonia established a scholarship scheme for students who want to enrol in one of the world's top 100 universities according to the Shanghai list for the studies of law, technical sciences, architecture, civic engineering, mathematics, economics, finances, physics, biology, chemistry, or genetics. Should they be accepted, the Government will pay them the funds for their enrolment in return for their mandatory return to North Macedonia for a period twice as long as the studies.

OLDEST UNIVERSITY "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje	1949
YOUNGEST UNIVERSITY "Mother Teresa" in Skopje	2016
BIGGEST UNIVERSITY "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje	25 220 students as of 2019
MOST POPULAR FACULTY Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering in Skopje	3 473 students as of 2019

→ INTERNET

Ministry of Education and Science
→ mon.gov.mk

Council of Media Ethics
of Macedonia
→ sem.mk

Office for Development of Education
→ bro.gov.mk

Adult Education Center
→ cov.gov.mk

Centre for Vocational Education
and Training
→ csoo.edu.mk

State testing centre
→ dic.edu.mk

Agency for Youth and Sports
→ ams.gov.mk

National Agency for European
Educational Programmes and Mobility
→ na.org.mk

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Macedonian primary school system is highly centralised, while the secondary school system is decentralised to a certain degree, mainly in terms of school management. Curricula are designed exclusively by the Ministry of Education and Science. In the academic year 2018/2019, there were 188 102 pupils and 18 272 teachers at 987 primary schools in North Macedonia, as well as 71 650 students enrolled in 132 high-schools with 7479 teachers.

Primary and secondary education are compulsory and free of charge for every young person.

Primary education is divided into two parts: year 1 to year 5, and year 6 to year 9. All schools teach according to the same curricula, without any specific orientation. In 2019, the Assembly adopted a new Law on Primary Education, which contains provisions and conditions concerning children with disabilities, which is a new feature.

After completion of primary education, a pupil has two choices: to enrol in a grammar school, with a curriculum based on social sciences and maths, or to enrol in a vocational school.

Secondary school takes from three to four years, depending on the chosen module. In general, grammar schools take four years, while some vocational schools offer three-year programmes.

Foreign language teaching is also well-established within the school system, with English as the most popular and first foreign language followed by German, French, and Russian.

The education system is facing numerous challenges. According to the 2015 and 2018 PISA survey, North Macedonia ranks 67th. There have been numerous efforts for educational reforms, out of which the introduction of the Cambridge International Examination Programme Centre

MILESTONES

1949

The first University is established

2005

The implementation of the Bologna Credit Transfer System into higher education begins

2010

The Government establishes a scholarship programme for students that are admitted to one of the world's top 100 universities according to the Shanghai list

(United Kingdom) was the most notable. The latter is related to mathematics and science from 1st to 6th grade, and natural science subjects such as physics, chemistry, and biology from 7th to 9th grade.

In 2019, a pilot reform programme on dual education was introduced. This programme combines theory and practical education, with both types taking up about 50%. It is piloted in vocational school in partnership with private companies, where students have the opportunity to apply their knowledge in practice. The goal of the programme is to reduce the gap between education and the labour market.

The primary and secondary education systems are highly formalised, with very little room for non-formal education and innovation. In recent years, the state has been trying to support innovation among the schools and their pupils by offering grants, operated by the Fund for Innovation and Technological Development (FITR, www.fitr.mk). In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, FITR provides the

possibility for primary and secondary schools to apply with mixed teams of pupils and teachers who have innovative ideas from the field of natural and technical sciences.

Primary and secondary schools also have the possibility to use the funds of the Erasmus+ programme and to partner with schools from the European Union in order to exchange practices and knowledge among the teaching staff and pupils.

6.27 million Euros

have been granted by the **National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility in the area of Education and Training**

2015

The Fund for Innovation and Technological Development starts to finance projects in the area of ICT, electrical engineering, agriculture, creative industries, and mineral production

2019

New concept of dual education is introduced into the secondary school system

SOCIETY

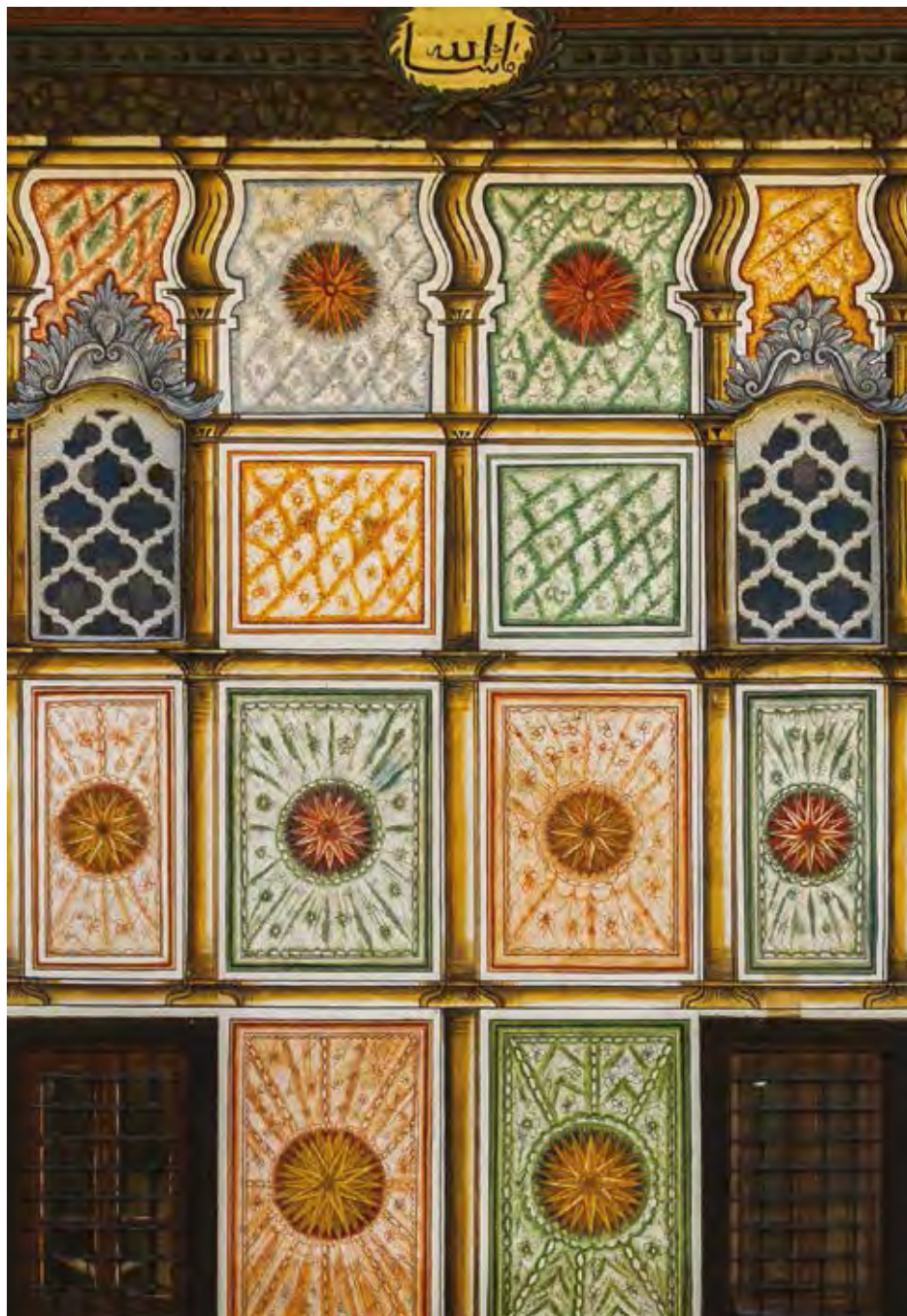
Freedom of religion • Civil society • Migration

by Nenad Markovic, PhD
Faculty of law "Iustinianus Primus" – Skopje

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

The Republic of North Macedonia is a multi-confessional society where several global religions meet and live side by side. North Macedonia guarantees freedom of religion by means of a number of international documents it has signed as well as by its national legislation. North Macedonia is a party to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe, which, in its Article 9, guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The country has also signed and adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief of the United Nations, which explicitly bans discrimination based on religion in its Article 2.

The basis of religious freedom in the Republic of North Macedonia is the Constitution,¹ which in its Article 19 defines the secular nature of the state and guarantees freedom of religious belief. In 2001, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia amended the Constitution and ever since, besides the Macedonian Orthodox Church, explicitly mentions the Islamic religious community, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical-Methodist Church and the Jewish community as major religious denominations with their right to form religious schools and charity organizations, however not excluding smaller religious groups. A detailed legal framework on establishing religious organisations is provided by the Law on the Legal Status ►



Details of the painted walls of the Šarena Džamija in Tetovo

► of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups.² This law regulates all aspects of religious life of both more and less numerous religious organisations, based on the principles of equal treatment, religious freedom, and secularism.

The equal treatment of all religious communities implies that the Republic of North Macedonia is a secular state. There is no official state religion, although the most widespread religions are Orthodox Christianity and Islam.

In a national research on perceptions on religion and its role in multi-confessional societies in 2016,³ respondents in the Republic of North Macedonia provided the following answers:

- 52,4% of the respondents said that they are religious, and 30,6% that they are somewhat religious;
- 75,2% of the respondents said that they belong to the Orthodox religion, and 21,6% said that belong to the Islamic faith. The Catholic religion is represent-

ed by 0,4% of the respondents, while other religions are represented by 2,4%;

- 25,3% of the respondents said that the religious communities in the country contribute to the inter-religious cohabitation in the country and respect for people of different religions, while an additional 26,9% thought that this is true to some extent.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, religious instruction is not allowed outside the education organised by the religious organisations, which means that it is prohibited both in elementary and high schools. Religious instruction remains exclusively in the domain of religious organisations. Formally, religious symbols are prohibited in schools and universities.

Religious tolerance is perceived as an important factor for the co-existence of different ethnic groups and religions. This is an important feature of Macedonian society, since the ethnic and religious landscape of the country is very versatile. In a survey on religion in 2017,⁴ as many as 64,5% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the welfare of the Macedonian society depends on the level of religious tolerance, while 29% agreed with this statement to some extent. Additionally, as many as 63% of the respondents said that the religious affiliation of their friends and neighbours does not affect their closeness and the ability to cooperate with other people. ■

→ INTERNET

Commission for relations with religious communities and groups

→ kovz.gov.mk

CIVIL SOCIETY

North Macedonia guarantees the freedom of association, according to Article 20 of the Constitution. The freedom of association is being practised in different direct and organised forms of democratic action. However, the most organised and visible forms are non-governmental organisations (NGOs), formally called citizens' associations. The Law on Associations and Foundations as of 2010⁵ establishes five major principles for the work of NGOs:

1. Independence;
2. Public work and transparency;
3. Non-profit nature;
4. Non-partisan character;
5. Initiatives in public life.

North Macedonia has a relatively high number of NGOs: in 2018, the overall number was 14291, including citizens' associations and foundations.⁶ With a total population of 2 022 547 according to the last census in 2002, it turns out that North Macedonia has one NGO per 141.5 inhabitants. However, not all listed organisations are permanently active, and the NGO scene is divided into various sub-sectors (ecology, democratic development, human rights, LGBT rights, religion, solidarity and social aid, etc.).

Providing sustainability for such a large number of diversified civil society organisations is not ►



Citizens' protest against air pollution

► easy. Direct economic activity of NGOs is forbidden by law, but accumulating funds that serve NGO sustainability and its basic aims and activities is allowed. However, economic sustainability mostly depends on two factors: foreign donors and support from state institution. In a 2017 survey by the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation,⁷ as many as 57% of the surveyed NGOs stated that they have obtained funds for their activities from foreign donors. Meanwhile, only 15% of the surveyed organisations said that they have obtained funds from the state (local self-government units excluded), although the overall sum of state transfers to NGOs is increasing every year. For instance, in 2014, the overall sum of state transfers to NGOs was 4 541 000 EUR, in 2015 it was 673 180 EUR, in 2017 it was 6 147 810 EUR, and in 2018, the sum amounted to approximately 7 413 577 EUR.

Civil society organisations carry out many activities in partnership with state institutions. For instance, such initiatives cover the Open Government Partnership (OGP), which foresees that NGOs directly support state institutions in undertaking commitments of the Action Plan 2018-2020. This plan contains OGP activities to improve transparency, accountability and access to data of both state and local institutions. Another example are the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, which are part of the Sustainable Development Agenda

2030, with civil society playing a crucial part in the implementation of activities. Besides the partnership of state and civil society, civil society organisations initiate and carry out many grass-root initiatives and processes. The "Blueprint for urgent democratic reform"⁸ is one example, an effort by a number of civil society organisations to provide guidelines for future democratic developments.

Citizens' associations are not the only organised form of civil society. Trade unions are a form of civil society organisations which represent labour rights. The overall number of registered trade unions is 62,⁹ with four umbrella organizations, the largest of which is the Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of North Macedonia. Employers are organised in chambers of commerce, the largest ones of which are the Union of Chambers of Commerce of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Chamber of Commerce of North-east Macedonia.

Direct citizen involvement in protests, marches and rallies is growing rapidly. The development of civil society involves not only organised forms of civil engagement, but also direct street protests and marches, as well as rallies in support of various political and social causes important to different groups of the Macedonian population. The right to protest and assemble is guaranteed by the Constitution and respective laws. ■



Grass-root action for a cleaner environment

MIGRATION

Traditionally, the Republic of North Macedonia is a society of emigrants, with a very small group of immigrants. Traditional destination for economic emigrants from North Macedonia are Germany, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, Canada, Australia, the USA, etc. These countries have the biggest diasporas originating from the Republic of North Macedonia.

The Macedonian diaspora is relatively young. The first noticeable migration waves occurred at the beginning of the 20th century, under Ottoman rule, and after the Second World War. The predominant motivation for migration was economical, but political reasons should not be underestimated. The second wave of migration took place in the 1960ies, and the third big wave was triggered by the dissolution of the Socialist

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the independence of the Macedonian Republic.¹⁰ Once again, both economic and political reasons motivated a large number of Macedonians to emigrate to traditional destinations in Europe and across the globe. The trend of emigration from North Macedonia has continued during the last decade, with a noticeable change of structure: nowadays, mostly skilled and highly qualified labour force is leaving the country in search of a better life.

It is very hard to determine the precise number of Macedonians permanently living in other countries. The most precise approach is to follow the censuses of the countries where Macedonians traditionally migrate to. According to this approach, the largest Macedonian diasporas live in the following countries:¹¹

Table 1. Number of Macedonians in traditional migration destinations according to local censuses in respective countries

COUNTRY	Number of Macedonians	Year of census	Source
Germany	106.555	2018	https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publicationen/Downloads-Migration/auslaend-bevoelkerung-2010200187004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3
Italy	78.090	2007	http://demo.istat.it/str2007/index.html
USA*	69.446	2013	https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_1YR_B04003&prodType=table
Switzerland	66.070	2017	https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/catalogues-databases/publications.assetdetail.6606499.html
Canada	43.110	2016	http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/imm/Table.cfm?Lang=E&T=31&Geo=01
Australia**	38.981	2016	https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/people-australia-2013-statistics.pdf

* 291.045 said that they have Yugoslavian origin, so that some part of this group of citizens, too, is of Macedonian origin

** Citizens born in North Macedonia

Table 2. Number of Macedonian emigrants in the world according to data gathered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia¹²

Oversea countries	Number (according to the estimation of Macedonian embassies)	Number (local country statistics - Statistical Offices of respective countries, censuses, Ministry of interior etc.)
Australia	200 000	81.898
USA	200 000	43.783
Canada	150 000	30 915 / 31 265
New Zealand	15 000	621
Total	565.000	
European countries		
Germany	75 000 - 85 000	42.550 / 51.841
Switzerland	63 000	61 455
Italy	50 000	34 500
The Netherlands	10 000 - 15 000	10 000 -15 000 / 1091
Austria	10 000 - 15 000	3 607
Sweden	12 000 - 15 000	4 872 / 4 144
France	12 000	7 000 -10 000
Belgium		2 054 / 3 288
Denmark	12 000	3 147
England	9 000 - 10 000	
Norway	2 000	
Czech Republic	2 000	
Poland	2 000	
Russia	1 000	54
Island	200	
Finland	200	
Spain	200	
Luxembourg		356
Total	284.600	

With regard to migration during the last five years, the State Statistical Office of the Republic

of North Macedonia provides the following statistics:

Table 3. Migration trends of the last five years in the Republic of North Macedonia¹³

Year	Total Immigrated	Total Emigrated	Net Migration
2018	2 926	377	+ 2 549
2017	2 626	424	+ 2 202
2016	2 764	630	+ 2 134
2015	3 876	1016	+ 2 860
2014	2 538	839	+ 1 699

However, the State Statistic Office takes into consideration only the Ministry of Interior's data on foreign citizens who have registered an extended stay and Macedonian citizens who have reported their emigration (which is not compulsory and very rarely done voluntarily). Another serious obstacle for providing ac-

curate statistics is the fact that the last census was carried out in 2002, so that there are no updated figures on the overall population.

The World Bank provides more informative statistics with its estimates on migration trends for the period 2002-2017:

Table 4. Migration trends in the period 2002-2017 in the Republic of North Macedonia¹⁴

Year	Net Migration
2017	- 4.999
2012	- 8.853
2007	- 7.399
2002	- 14.572

Remittances play a considerable role in the overall economic structure of North Macedonia. Furthermore, the increasing emigration can be seen from the data on mon-

ey transfers by the diaspora. The increase during the last six years is considerable, as data from the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia indicates:

Table 5. Money transfers in the period 2014-2019 (Q1) from the diaspora to the Republic of North Macedonia¹⁵

Year	Million USD
2019 Q1	49,2
2018	235,9
2017	219,0
2016	213,6
2015	231,2
2014	270,3

The Macedonian diaspora is represented by the United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD) which is the leading international non-governmental organisation to promote the interests and needs of Macedonians and Macedonian communities worldwide.¹⁶ The agency officially concerned with issues related to Macedonian emigrants is the Agency for Emigration of the Republic of North Macedonia.¹⁷ The registration of emigrants from the Republic of North Macedonia can be made on the web page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁸ ■

→ INTERNET

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

→ mfa.gov.mk

State Statistical Office

→ stat.gov.mk

World Bank Group

→ worldbank.org

United Macedonian Diaspora

→ umdiaspora.org

National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia

→ nbrm.mk

THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Public Broadcaster • TV Stations • Radio Stations • Print Media • Online Media

by Dragan Sekulovski

Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM)

In the beginning of its establishment, in the early 1990ies, the Republic of North Macedonia had one public broadcaster, Macedonian Radio Television (MRT), and just a few printed newspapers. However, in the following years, the media business started to develop, and, as a result, new private broadcasters and print media began to operate and disseminate information to the public. Nowadays, rough statistics imply that there are around 300 media outlets operating in a media market of less than 25 million, with less than 1000 journalists employed.

There are numerous traditional and online media outlets in North Macedonia, all operating in a rather small market of media, which makes pluralism and sustainability challenging to achieve. The many different media outlets include one national public broadcaster, Macedonian Radio Television (MRT), 123 private broadcasters (53 TV stations and 70 radio stations), 23 registered print media (five of which are daily print papers, three in Macedonian and two in Albanian, and several weekly editions), and more than 150 informative online media. In addition, there is one state-owned information agency, the Media Information Agency (MIA). Based on this data, we can conclude that there are approximately 250 media outlets

in North Macedonia which struggle to survive on a market of less than 25 million Euro annually (in the past years), excluding MRT and MIA. Commercial TV stations achieve the largest incomes: in 2018, this amount was 24.5 million Euro, while for MRT, it was 16 million Euro, the smallest budget for the public broadcaster in recent years.

Based on estimates by the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM), approximately 1000 journalists are currently employed in traditional and online media outlets. Most of the journalists are employed with the traditional media, despite the high popularisation of online media in the recent years. ■



Building of the National Radio Television in Skopje

THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER MACEDONIAN RADIO TELEVISION (MRT)

MRT, member of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), had 818 employees in December 2018 and has had an annual budget of 16 to 21 million Euro in the last few years. The largest part of MRT's budget used to be covered by the broadcasting tax, however, in September 2017, this financing model was changed following amendments to the respective law. Ever since, MRT is financed directly from the state budget. The broadcasting tax was terminated due to the insufficient collection system. As of January 2018, MRT is financed with 0.8% of the annual budget of the Republic of North Macedonia. Until 2020, this share should rise to 1%, which is expected to be sufficient for stable financial conditions for the public broadcaster as a basic precondition for its independence. The broadcasting tax was inadequate given the local context, which made MRT the second largest public enterprise with a debt of more than 25 million Euro to different public and private vendors.

MRT was founded by the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia in 1993. Previously, it had been operating as a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Currently, MRT is producing and broadcasting media content in six different languages: Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Roma, Serbian, and Bosnian.

The content is broadcast on three channels: on MRT 1 in Macedonian, on MRT 2 mainly in minority languages, and on MRT 3, which broadcasts the sessions of the Assembly. In July 2016, amendments to the media regulations were made as part of the "Pržino Agreement", which stipulates that a separate channel within MRT broadcast content in Albanian during 24 hours a day. However, this has not yet been implemented.

Apart from the TV channels, MRT has **three radio channels**, two of which broadcast in Macedonian and one in the minority languages.

As of 2003, MRT is also broadcasting content via satellite channel, with the target audience being mainly the Macedonian diaspora.

The content produced within MRT is diverse and comprised of news, debates, educational programmes, cultural and entertainment content, documentary movies, and sports, for the entire audience inside and outside the country, including persons with special needs. ■

→ INTERNET

Macedonian RadioTelevision

→ mrt.com.mk

PRIVATE NATIONAL TERRESTRIAL TV STATIONS

There are five TV stations with the license to broadcast on national level via digital terrestrial multiplex: TV Alfa, TV Alsat-M, TV Kanal 5, TV Sitel, and TV Telma. In 2018, the largest income, 16.5 million Euro, went to these five media outlets. On an annual level, during the last few years, approximately 45% of that share go to TV Sitel, followed by TV Kanal 5, TV Alsat M, TV Telma and, finally, TV Alfa. The trend is declining, and the total budget of all these media outlets has been decreasing in the last years. However, this still indicates that the largest part of the media market is focused on these outlets. The largest share in the income of these outlets stems mainly from commercial sales, which is 90%. Other types of incomes are sales of media content, grants, and other means.

Four of these media outlets produce and broadcasts content in Macedonian language, while TV Alsat mainly produces content in Albanian, but also in Macedonian. All the TV stations have relatively good coverage on the national level, and all of them have a mixed programme scheme that includes information, education and entertainment. They are members of an association that occasionally raises its voice when media reforms are on the agenda. Some of these media outlets are also represented in the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM), a media self-regulatory body based on membership.

The total average number of employees of these media outlets was 572, which is 40 persons less than in the previous year. ■

PRIVATE NATIONAL TV STATIONS THAT BROADCAST VIA SATELLITE AND VIA OPERATOR OF A PUBLIC ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

The number of TV stations that broadcast via satellite varies from year to year, with the main reason being the easier access for obtaining a license from the media regulator. In 2018, there were eight TV stations of this kind, which had a total income of a bit more than three million Euro. TV 24 has the largest share of income gained by commercials, as well as the

largest number of employees (102 in 2018). One newly established growing media outlet, 1TV, was closed in 2019 due to involvement of part of its management in a corruption scandal. Based on the reports of the media regulator for 2018, these media outlets regularly employed approximately 300 journalists and technical staff. ■



Media landscape

REGIONAL TV STATIONS

In general, these media outlets are more numerous compared to the national ones, and they cover one or more municipalities at the same time, depending on their capacity. In total, there were 19 regional media outlets in the beginning of 2018, with a joint annual income of 1.3 million Euro, which was three times less than in 2016. Apart from the income gained with commercials, some of these media receive direct subsidies from the municipalities, although

this is not exactly allowed by law, which leads to the risk of a selective approach. Most of the regional media outlets are also members in an association that strives to represent their needs vis-à-vis the lawmakers. The total number of employees with these media outlets is smaller, compared to the outlets with national coverage. It varies from 5 to 30 journalists and technical staff. On average, there were 157 persons employed in all regional media outlets. ■

LOCAL TV STATIONS

In the beginning of 2018, 22 media outlets were operating on a local level. Their joint annual income was 380.000 Euro (compared to

600.000 Euro in 2016). These 22 regional TV stations employed an average number of 47 employees, which is 27 less than in 2017. ■

RADIO STATIONS

The radio stations, too, have to obtain broadcasting licenses from the media regulator, with the exception of online radios. There are four commercial national radio stations that broadcast in the entire territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, using different frequencies, depending on the region. In 2018, the total annual income of these four stations was 900.000 Euro, which is 500.000 less than in 2016. Two of the stations, Kanal 77 and Radio Free Macedonia, broadcast informative programmes apart from the other content, while Radio Antenna 5 and Radio Metropolis are mainly oriented at entertainment programmes. These four radio stations em-

ployed an average of 35 persons during 2018.

On the regional level, there are 17 broadcasters. Despite the higher number compared to the national broadcasters, in 2018, their total income was a bit less than the total budget of the four national radio stations.

The category with the most media outlets is local radio stations, with a total number of 53. In 2016, their joint income was around 600.000 Euro. The number of local radio stations varies from year to year, so that, at the moment, it is considered that there are 47 stations with local range. ■

PRINT MEDIA

Since December 2013, the print media are obliged to submit basic information regarding their circulation and contact of responsible persons to the media regulator, the Agency of Audio and Audio Media Services (AAAMS). In the respective register (which is publicly available on the web page of the regulator), there are currently 23 print media, but not all

of them have a traditional informative format, and some of them are thematic (cooking, fashion, sports, etc.). After Media Print Macedonia (MPM), an enterprise previously owned by the German WAZ Mediagroup, was closed in 2017, several mainstream daily newspapers were shut down. At the moment, there are five daily newspapers: Sloboden Pečat, Nova Make-

donija, Večer, Lajm, and Koha. The majority of the papers publishes their content in Macedonian, Koha and Lajm write in Albanian. Nezavisen, which was established in late 2017 and partly published in English, was closed in November 2019 due to economic reasons. There are also several national weekly editions, such as the mainstream political magazine Fokus, as well as Kapital, which focuses on economic issues. There are also some free newspapers which are distributed throughout the capital city, like Skopsko Eho. The total annual unofficial income of all print media, national and local, regardless of the topics they cover, is roughly estimated to be around two million Euro.

In 2018, the majority of print media were beneficiaries of state subventions. Those subventions cover 50% of annual expenses for circulation and print for all media that fulfil the conditions and that apply to an open call. This measure, which is not new in the region, was requested by the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) and later also by the Association of Print Media, an organisation newly established by AJM, which is mainly represented by the media managers. In 2019, the Government allocated a total of 800.000 Euro of subventions for 2020, for all the print medi that will apply for the subventions via the open call. ■

ONLINE MEDIA

There is a vast number of online media in Macedonia, and there is no official data about the exact number. There are several news aggregates, however, the most popular one is **www.time.mk**, which includes around one hundred separate online media, despite the strict criteria for aggregating. Based on some assessments, the actual number is over 150 online media outlets that (semi)regularly publish informative content, such as politics and daily news, while others focus on entertainment, sports, fashion etc.

There are several platforms which also publish content in English, including three or four online media focused on investigative journalism. All online media are under self-regulation, and most of the credible ones are members in the media self-regulatory bodies.

In 2019, the AJM, in cooperation with the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia (media self-regulatory body) and supported by the national Chamber of Commerce, initiated the drafting of a register of professional online media. All informative online media that fulfil the basic criteria set by the two associations, in line with international standards, will be entered into this register and later monitored by the audience on whether they respect the ethical standards. The role of the Chamber of Commerce is to motivate private companies to support the ethical media in order for the unethical ones to be marginalised by advertisers. This model promises to promote ethical online media in the general public, however, time is needed to measure the results and the impact. ■

REGULATION IN THE MEDIA SECTOR

The primary laws that regulate the media sector are the Law on Audio and Audio-visual Media Services (LAAM) and the Media Law, both adopted in December 2013. The subject of the LAAM is to regulate the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of broadcasters, providers of audio-visual media services on demand, and operators of public electronic communication networks which transmit or retransmit programme services of broadcasters. The provisions of the LAAM apply to all broadcasters, TV and radio stations, including the public service (MRT). The responsible public entity is the Ministry of Information Society and Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia (MISA). The competent authority is the Agency for Audio and Audio-visual Media Services (AAAMS). The LAAM was last amended in December 2018, and the major changes refer to the new models of managing boards of the public broadcaster and the media regulator. The election of new members to these two important media sector bodies has been blocked for several months, since a two-thirds majority of the Members of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia (and hence a political consensus) is needed. ■

→ INTERNET

Association of Journalists of Macedonia
→ znm.org.mk

Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia
→ semm.mk

Independent Union of Journalists and Media Professionals (SSNM)
→ ssnm.org.mk

Macedonian Institute for Media (MIM)
→ mim.org.mk

Institute of communication studies
→ iks.edu.mk

Ministry for information society and administration
→ mio.gov.mk

Agency for audio and audio-visual media services
→ avmu.mk

Macedonian Radio Television
→ mrt.com.mk

Macedonian Information Agency
→ mia.mk

CULTURE AND WAY OF LIFE

North Macedonia: A country of rich cultural heritage • Culture and events •
Customs and traditions • Food • Wine

by Roza Nolcheva Angelovska
Musicologist

NORTH MACEDONIA: A COUNTRY OF RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE

To nature and culture lovers alike, North Macedonia has great attractions to offer. From its lush green nature, beautiful lakes and mountains to the cities full of old architecture, artefacts and buzzing nightlife, the country is a small gem shining bright in the heart of the Balkans.

Skopje, the capital city of the country, is easily accessed from Skopje International airport (17 km) with links to most major European cities. The other airport of the country (St. Paul the Apostle Airport) is situated near the tourist centre Ohrid. Skopje has something to offer to everyone: there are plenty of sites to visit, good food in relatively inexpensive restaurants, fun nightlife, and a good choice of events around the year.

The Skopje aqueduct on the outskirts of the capital (about 2km, near the village Vizbegovo) dates back to Roman times according to some sources, while others locate it in the time of the Byzantine reign. There are also sources that state that it was built in the 16th century by the Ottomans to serve the many Turkish hamams located in Skopje, one of which is the **Daut Pasha Hamam** at the entrance to the Old Bazaar. Well preserved and a historic monument of Islamic culture, today, the Daut Pasha Hamam houses the National Gallery, exhibiting works by the finest Macedonian painters and sculptors. The space is also used for small chamber concerts.

The Old Bazaar is one of Skopje's most au-



Kale Fortress

thentic places to visit. Buzzing with life, it is home to many small shops along small cobble streets. You can buy handcrafts, textile, gold and silver, but the Bazaar also hides some of the most beautiful religious objects

such as the **Church of the Holy Saviour** (Sveti Spas) with its magnificent wood carvings, as well as the **Mustafa Pasha Mosque** built in 1492. The tomb of the great Macedonian revolutionary **Goce Delčev** (1872-1903) ►



The Millennium Cross overlooking the city of Skopje

► can be found there as well. In the many cafés and restaurants of the Bazaar, traditional Turkish tea and sweets are served, but also Turkish coffee (traditionally cooked in a small copper pot), one of the Macedonians' favourite beverages, drunk by many at the start of the day. The Museum of Macedonia, founded in 1924, is also located inside the Bazaar, next to **Kurshumli An**, a historic object of culture from the 16th century. Overlooking the city are the walls of the Skopje Fortress, more commonly known as **Kale Fortress**. Built initially in the 6th Century AD and rebuilt in Byzantine times during the reign of Justinian I, the Fortress is one of the city's landmarks. Beautifully lit at night, it offers wonderful photo opportunities. From the highest point of the Tower one can get beautiful vistas of Skopje, the river, as well as Vodno Mountain, topped by the 66 meters high **Millennium Cross** which was built to mark 2000 years of

Christianity. Visitors can reach the Cross by aerial ropeway.

The **Stone Bridge** links the Old Bazaar and its historic artefacts to the new, central core of Skopje, the main **City Square**, which is dominated by a large fountain and sculpture of Alexander the Great on a horse. The statue and fountain, along with many of the monuments, sculptures and buildings in the vicinity of the square, were built between 2009 and 2016 in an attempt to beautify the city and give importance to various historical figures. Today, tourists are fascinated by the number of new monuments and new buildings on the left bank of the Vardar River, such as the **Archaeological museum**, the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, the Macedonian National Theatre, as well as some administrative buildings, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ■

SKOPJE EARTHQUAKE OF 1963

On July 26th 1963 at 05:17, Skopje woke up to the sounds of wailing sirens, following a 6.1 magnitude devastating earthquake. 1070 deceased and over 3000 were injured, while about 80% of the buildings were ruined. The world came together in a relief effort that helped rebuild the capital, which resulted in a completely new ur-

ban design. The Skopje City Museum located at what used to be the old railway station at the end of the pedestrian Macedonia Street bears witness of the destruction: the building was left as it was following the earthquake, when the clock on its front stopped at 05:17. ■

MOTHER TERESA (GONXHE BOJAXHIU)

The world-renowned nun Mother Teresa, winner of the Nobel Prize, recognized as a saint by Pope Francis in 2016, was born in Skopje on August 26th 1910 under the name Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu. The birth house of Mother Teresa was where the main square is today, and the position of the house is marked with a plaque. The Mother Teresa Memorial House was built in 2009 in the centre of the city, in the pedestrian Macedonia Street, accompanied by a monument of Mother Teresa in prayer. The aim of

the exhibit in the Memorial House is to follow her life, from her childhood spent in Skopje, the years spent as a Missionary of Charity, all the way until her death and canonisation. The most important items in the museum are the traditional white sari with blue stripes, the official habit of the Missionaries of Charity, a copy of the Baptism certificate from the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, authorised copies of documents with her handwriting, and her awards. ■

MATKA CANYON

Matka Canyon is located about 30 km from the capital. It offers a nice escape from the daily dynamic of Skopje. The most popular sight is the Vrelo cave, the biggest one in a system of ten caves. It has been explored by deep divers and cave divers from all over the world, who have

reached a depth of 240 meters, which makes it the deepest explored cave in the Balkans and the second deepest in Europe. Vrelo cave is open to the public and illuminated, boat tours are scheduled daily. Matka Canyon is attractive for kayaking and hiking. ■



Interior of the Macedonian National Theatre

MAIN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND EVENTS

Skopje is home to some of North Macedonia's main cultural institutions. The **Philharmonic Orchestra** was established in 1944. Since 2017, it resides in a brand new concert hall that is one of its kind in the region. Built to highest standards, it seats an audience of 900 and brings world-renowned soloists and conductors to the stage. The **National Opera and Ballet** is situated right next to the concert hall in a striking building from 1979. It has a full orchestra, an opera and ballet company. One of its main events is the May Opera Festival, which is held every year and traditionally ends with a performance of Verdi's Aida.

There are five large theatre companies in the capital: the **Macedonian National Theatre**, the **Drama Theatre**, the **Comedy Theatre**, the **Children and Youth Theatre**, and the **Theatre of Turkish and Albanian Drama**. With an audience that enjoys theatre, it is only natural for Skopje to host the acclaimed International Young Open Theatre festival **MOT** organised by the Youth Culture Centre.

The first Balkan cinematographers Milton and Yanaki Manaki lived and had their photo studio in the city of Bitola. In 1904, Yanaki brought the first film camera, a Bioscope 300, to his home town, and the first film in South East Europe was shot by the two brothers, who have subsequently become important figures for Macedonian cinematography. The National Archive preserves more than 17,000 photos and over 2000 meters of film by the Manaki brothers. In their honour, the Association of Film Workers of Macedonia organises the **International Film Festival "Manaki Brothers"**, which takes place every year in Bitola. **Before the Rain**, a film by Macedonian director Milčo Mančevski featuring Rade Šerbedžija and Labina Mitevska, won the "Golden Lion" award at the Venice Film Festival in 1994 and was nominated for an Academy Award in the category Best Foreign Language Film in 1995. Skopje is also the host of 2 international film festivals: the **CINEDAYS Festival of European Film** and the **Makedox Festival of Creative and Documentary Film**.

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

North Macedonia's rich tradition is reflected in the music, dance, dresses, and celebrations of people in different regions.

One of the most popular events is the **Galičnik Wedding Festival**, which takes place in the small village of Galičnik every July. The bride and groom are carefully selected, and one of the partners must originate from the village itself. During the 2 day wedding celebration, all traditions must be honoured as in old times: the bride and groom must wear traditional dresses with all embellishments and jewellery, both are dressed in the main colours of white, red and black. The bride's dress, with all additions, can weigh up to a stunning 30kg. During the two days of the wedding, the family, friends and everybody attending are witnessing over 20 various traditions linked to the holy marriage communion, including songs, dance, and gift bearing. The traditional dance "**Teškoto**" ("The hard one") is performed by an all-male party, accompanied by the sounds of the "tapan" ("drum"), whereas one of the performers dances on top

of the drum standing on one foot. Only the best dancers can perform this traditional dance ("oro") which aims to depict the hardships of the Macedonian people through its slow pace and heavy movements.

The **Vevčani Carnival** takes place in the small village of Vevčani in the West of the country, close to the border between North Macedonia and Albania, and is linked to the celebration of St. Basil the Great and the old Orthodox New Year on January 13th. This pagan tradition has been kept alive for over 1400 years. It features gory masks reminding of the dead, zombie-like creatures, as well as masks that are inspired by the events of the previous year. The Carnival attracts spectators from all over the country and the region. During the two days of the Carnival, people can obtain a passport of the Independent Republic of Vevčani, a model country that aims to attract tourists. The "independence" is linked to a political event in 1987, when the Yugoslavian authorities tried to redirect water from Vevčani to nearby Struga. The inhabitants protested by proclaiming an independent republic which turned out short-lived, but has now been revived and serves as a tourist attraction since 2000, with its own flag, passport and currency. Vevčani is a member of the Federation of European Carnival cities.

Another important carnival takes place in the city of Strumica. The history of the **Strumica Carnival** dates back to 1670, when it was mentioned in the travelogues of Evliya Chelebi. Every year at the beginning of the Great Lent before Easter, the carnival starts with the traditional masked ball. ■

→ INTERNET

Macedonian Opera and Ballet
→ mob.mk

Macedonian National Theatre
→ mnt.mk

Macedonian Philharmonic
→ filharmonija.mk

Young Open Theatre Festival
→ mot.mk

FOOD

North Macedonia is an excellent destination for people who enjoy good food and wine. With Macedonian tradition strongly revolving around family events, people throw big family celebrations which are concentrated around large meals consisting of freshly made pastries and pies, fresh salads with local vegetable produce, and lovely rich stews cooked in traditional clay pots. Food bears the tastes and colours of the Mediterranean and, like in all Balkan countries, has preserved the rich Ottoman heritage, with plenty of spices that include sweet paprika, oregano, dried chili flakes, parsley, etc. As the country is landlocked, most dishes include pork, chicken or beef, but there is also plenty of sweet water fish that is usually grilled.

Some of the **most famous dishes** are tavče gravče (baked beans in a rich tomato and papri-

ka sauce), Vardar pot (vegetable and meat stew cooked in gravy in a clay pot), selsko meso (village style meat with 3 kinds of meats and mushrooms in sauce), zelnik and komat (savory pies with a cheese, meat or spinach filling), ajvar (red pepper spread usually eaten with fresh bread) and pastrmajlija (a dough topped with pieces of spiced pork and a tiny bit of dried sheep or lamb meat that enhances the flavour).

Macedonians cherish their coffee culture. In the past, people invited their friends, family and neighbours for coffee and sweets, and today that is reflected in the many coffee shops that are always full. Visit the pedestrian Macedonia Street for good coffee and people watching, and the many restaurants in the Bazaar and the central city area that offer international and national quality food at affordable prices. ■



Traditional Macedonian dishes



Wine barrels in a Macedonian winery

WINE

Macedonian wines go back to Roman times, according to artefacts found at archaeological sites. These artefacts include drawings of wine and grapes on marble and terracotta, but also objects like the krater (VI-V century BC) found near Ohrid, a large vase which was used for watering down wine. Historians claim that wine has been produced here since over 4000 years. Today, more than 33.500 ha of land is covered with vineyards producing over 300.000 tons of grapes every year. Statistically, North Macedonia is the 25th country in the world regarding wine production, with 40% of the wine being bottled, and 60% sold in bulk. Bottled wine is mainly exported to Croatia and Serbia, while about 48% of the bulk goes to Germany.

The main wine region is the Povardarie (along the Vardar river), also known as Tikveš region, near the cities of Kavadarci and Negotino, where most of the vineyards and wineries are situated. Tikveš winery is the largest and oldest one in North Macedonia, with a tradition of over

125 years. It produces red, white and rosé wines in a variety of sorts including Vranec, Cabernet, Merlot, Temjanika etc. The most traditional and authentic wine of North Macedonia and the region is the dark coloured and full-bodied potent Vranec, a grape that flourishes in the Tikveš region.

Besides Tikveš, the wine route takes wine lovers to smaller wineries such as Bovin, Skovin, Popova Kula and Stobi, with the latter being located close to **Stobi**, a Roman archaeological site with a well-preserved amphitheatre and Basilica.

Another very important drink in Macedonian households is rakija, a brandy-like spirit made of grapes, with an alcoholic content of 40%. Many families make their own rakija at the end of summer. It is a tradition to produce this drink, which is mainly served as an aperitif with šopska salad and cheese, in small man-made backyard distilleries. ■

TOURISM

Ohrid: the city, the lake and the festival • The mountains • Bitola and Krushevo • Kokino

by Roza Nolcheva Angelovska
Musicologist

OHRID: THE CITY, THE LAKE AND THE FESTIVAL

Ohrid is one of North Macedonia's most beautiful cities, situated on the shores of the Ohrid Lake, one of Europe's oldest and deepest natural lakes. Declared a UNESCO world heritage site in 1979, Ohrid is the spiritual capital of North Macedonia. The town is linked to the Saints Cyril and Methodius, creators of the Cyrillic alphabet in the 9th century, and their students St. Clement and St. Naum of Ohrid, founders of the Ohrid Literary School in 886. Often referred to as the "Jerusalem of the Balkans", Ohrid's authentic architecture, cobbled streets and beautiful nature attract tourists from all over the world. Its strong spirituality originates from numerous churches spread all over the city, purportedly 365, one for every day of the year. Some of the most beautiful ones are the **Church of St. Sophia**, the **Church of St. John at Kaneo**, which offers spectacular views on the lake and is possibly the most photographed object in North Macedonia, as well as the **Monastery of St. Naum**, 29 km

from the city, at the very border with Albania. The city is overlooked by **Samuel's Fortress**, a medieval fortification restored in 2003. Archaeologists claim it was built by Tsar Samuel at the turn of the 10th century, on the grounds of a previous fort dating back to the 4th century, built by King Filip II of Macedon. The fortress has 18 towers and 4 gates covering a perimeter of 3 km. Near the fortress lies the archaeological site of **Plaošnik**, dominated by the Holy Church of St. Clement and Panteleimon. The church was fully rebuilt on the base of the old church from byzantine times in 2002, and in 2007, a deposit of 2383 Venetian coins was discovered by the archaeologist excavating the nearby monastery.

The **Ohrid lake** with its average depth of 155 meters is one of the oldest in Europe, dating back more than one million years. It is home to over 200 endemic species, including the Ohrid trout, a beautiful red-spotted trout which is protected by law and mustn't ►



Sunset above the church St. Jovan Kaneo in Ohrid

- ▶ be fished. Every summer, domestic and foreign tourists crowd the city and its beaches, attracted by nightlife and entertainment, as well as the moderate prices of accommodation and food. When in Ohrid, go to the green market and try the Ohrid cherries if they are in season, they will stun you with their size and flavour. Another staple of the Ohrid traditional cuisine is the **gjomleze**, a traditional pastry made of many layers of thin pancake-like dough, baked one on top of the other under a heavy heated cast iron lid.

Ohrid is also home to North Macedonia's most important cultural event: the **Ohrid Summer Festival** which takes place annually from July 12 to August 20. During the 40 days of performances, Ohrid welcomes some of the world's most acclaimed musical artists and becomes a hub for concerts, ballet and drama performances, which take place in various venues. The Church of St. Sophia opens its doors to art lovers, welcoming them for recitals and chamber concerts inside the church and for larger performances

in the vestibule. However, all large spectacles take place in the **Antique theatre** seating 3000, an amphitheatre from the 3rd century BC, which was discovered by archaeologists in the 1960's, restored and made fully functional by 2001.

The nearby city of **Struga** (15 km west of Ohrid) is also set on the shore of Ohrid lake, dominated by the Black Drim river, which flows out of the lake and into the city. A fairly small town, Struga's charm comes from the mix of ethnicities, various handcraft sold in the Old Bazaar and the many cafés and restaurants on both river banks. **Struga Poetry Evenings** is an annual event dating back to 1962 and bringing together over 200 poets from around the world. The central event is entitled Bridges, when poets address the audience from the Bridge of Poetry where the Black Drim exits the lake and runs into Struga. The laureate of the festival is presented with a Golden Wreath, the festival's main prize awarded to a living poet for their works or life achievement in poetry. ■



Peacock in the monastery of St.Naum



Macedonian mountains, equally beautiful in winter and summer

THE MOUNTAINS

North Macedonia's wondrous nature is not limited to Ohrid and its surroundings. The beauty and serenity of the Prespa and Dojran lakes invite tourists to a calmer, less crowded experience, set in villages where authenticity can be experienced at its best. Stay in a traditional village house and try some of the national dishes cooked by genuine Macedonian housewives. The lush green forests and mountains are a perfect place to be explored by hikers and nature lovers. Venture to **Berovo** in the East of the country for sunny days, the highest oxygen concentration in the Balkans and some exceptional cheese. Hiking is a popular activity among Macedonians, and the wonderful mountains and untouched nature also attract hikers from all over the world who are willing to explore the exciting wilderness and meet hospitable people on their way.

In winter, the same serenity can be found in the sport centres **Mavrovo** and **Popova Šapka**. In the Mavrovo National park that covers 192.000 acres, skiing and snowboarding are the favourite sports of local winter fans, along the slopes of Bistra Mountain. Mavrovo Lake is dominated by the sight of the submerged church of St. Nicholas. Go to Mavrovo and the region for good quality cheese, and do not miss out on the fascinating Monasteries **St. Jovan Bigorski** (XI century) with its unique wood carved iconostasis, and **Rajčica**, where the sisterhood produces the famous and rare episcopal mitres.

Horseback riding is popular in nearby Galičnik, which offers a real feel of untouched nature. One can see the process of cheese making in traditional sheepfolds and taste genuine home made food. ■

BITOLA AND KRUSHEVO

Bitola lies at the foot of the National park Pelister. It is a beautiful city which was especially important for diplomacy at the turn of the 20th century. It was the seat of consuls in the 19th century and they brought a specific European charm to the city. **The Clock tower** is a symbol of Bitola, and the neoclassical architecture is juxtaposed to architectural examples of ancient times with the antique city of **Heraclea Lyncestis**, but also the Ottoman period, with the Bezisten (covered bazaar), the recently restored Gazi Haydar Kadi Mosque, the Ishak Celebi Mosque, etc. The city is also known for its cemeteries: the **French cemetery** (more than 13.000 French soldiers were killed at the Macedonian front in WWI), the **German cemetery** (3406 German soldiers buried during WWI), the Serbian and the Jewish cemetery.

Kruševo is the highest town in North Macedonia, situated at an altitude of 1350 meters. In

winter, it is the place to go for Mountain biking, paragliding, skiing and snowboarding. When it comes to history, the place is famous for the **Kruševo Republic**, which followed the **Ilinden Uprising of 1903**. The latter started on August 2 and was the initial attempt at liberating Macedonia from Ottoman occupation. The famous Macedonian revolutionaries Goce Delčev, Pitu Guli and Nikola Karev were at the helm of the uprising, liberating Kruševo and proclaiming a free Republic. Albeit the Republic survived only 10 days, it led to outbursts of rebellion against the Ottoman Empire throughout the region. Visit the **Makedonium**, a strikingly modernist monument in honour of the Ilinden Uprising, the memorial house of one of North Macedonia's most celebrated painters **Nikola Martinoski** known for his portraits of women, as well as the memorial house and grave of **Toše Proeski**, a widely popular young Macedonian pop singer who tragically lost his life in a car accident in 2007. ■



Colourful stained glass at the Makedonium



Kokino observatory

KOKINO

Kokino is a megalithic observatory from the Bronze Age, a testimony for the creative human genius when it comes to using specific natural resources for satisfying vital needs and beliefs. Recognised by NASA as a significant

heritage of this type, Kokino is listed as the 4th oldest observatory in the world. Kokino is located in the North-East, 30 km from the town of Kumanovo. Guided tours are available on request. ■

EXCITING HERITAGE SITES

1 Kalle Fortress

Archaeological excavations at the Kale Fortress were carried out from 2007 to 2012. A total of 13,400 artefacts were found, 4527 of which are coins.



4 Millenium cross

With a height of 66 meters (without the concrete base), the Millennium Cross is as tall as the Statue of Liberty and 20 meters higher than the sculpture of Jesus in Rio de Janeiro. It is ranked 5th on the list of the world's tallest crosses.

10 Church St. John at Kaneo

The Church of St. John at Kaneo, the most photographed church in North Macedonia, is a unique site in the UNESCO protected city of Ohrid.



200

endemic species live in Ohrid Lake



18,000

tickets were sold within one day at the Skopje zoo



95%

WiFi coverage on the territory of North Macedonia



45.7°C

is the maximum temperature measured in North Macedonia



- 1 Kale Fortress
- 2 Mustafa Pasha Mosque
- 3 The Church of the Holy Savior
- 4 Millennium Cross
- 5 Holocaust Memorial Skopje
- 6 Archeology museum Skopje
- 7 Stobi
- 8 King Samoil's fortress
- 9 Plaoshnik
- 10 Church St. John at Kaneo
- 11 Colorful Mosque Tetovo
- 12 Tikvesh Winery
- 13 Heraclea Lyncestis
- 14 Makedonium Krushevo
- 15 Wood carvings at Monastery St. Jovan Bigorski

11 Colorful Mosque Tetovo

Some 22.000 egg yolks were used to prepare the paint used by the Debar masters in order to preserve the freshness of the colourful decorations on the inside and outside walls of the mosque.



120
naturally formed
pillars in the village of
Kuklica near Kratovo



19
pieces make up an
elaborate Macedonian
female traditional costume



40%
is the alcoholic
content of žolta rakija



3
national
parks

SPORTS

Football • Handball • Basketball • Marathon

by Roza Nolcheva Angelovska

Musicologist

Macedonians are a nation of sports lovers. Whenever a national team competes, there is a strong and dedicated support.

Vardar is a sports brand that incorporates Skopje's football and handball teams. In recent years, the handball teams have gained great popularity thanks to the high quality men's and women's league. Skopje's Vardar handball team won the EHF Men's Champions League in 2017 and 2019. However, one of the greatest international successes of Macedonian team sports was the 4th place of the Macedonian basketball team at the Eurobasket 2011 in Lithuania. Pero Antić was the first Macedonian to play in the NBA (2013-2015, for Atlanta Hawks).

Other popular sports include football, swimming (the Ohrid International Swimming Marathon is part of the Fina Open water marathon series) and karate. The latter two have gained North Macedonia the largest number of trophies at international competitions. The Matka Canyon hosts a wild-water kayaking and canoeing event every year, and the ski centre Popova Šapka is known for the Šarplanina skiing cup. The Skopje Marathon is organised annually in May and has attracted some of the world's fastest marathon runners since its establishment in 2008. ■



HC Vardar celebrates the title in EHF Champions League 2017

GETTING AROUND

Useful information for travelers

Passports and Visas: Foreign citizens are required to have a valid passport to enter North Macedonia. Some foreign nationals need a visa issued at the Macedonian embassy in the respective country. Citizens of EU Member States do not need a Macedonian visa if they enter the country as tourists. Holders of a valid British, US or Canadian visa can enter the country without visa for a maximum stay of 15 days. For further information, visit the website of the Ministry of Foreign affairs: →mfa.gov.mk

By air: North Macedonia has two international airports, one in Skopje and one in Ohrid. 14 airlines operate in the country, including budget airlines. Skopje airport is connected to the city centre by regular bus line. A taxi costs 20 euros approximately, and the trip takes about 30 minutes. →airports.mk

Skopje airport bus:
→manoragroup.com

By Rail: North Macedonia has a developed domestic railway system, but international lines are limited to the neighbouring countries. Trains from the main railway station in Skopje take passengers to the cities of Bitola, Prilep, Gevgelija, Kičevo, Kočani and Veles.
→mzt.mk

By Bus: Buses are most common to get around in the country. There are various and frequent domestic inter-city connections. Some are fast and direct, while other make stops on their routes. There are also regular international lines to Serbia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Turkey, Albania, Austria and Germany.
→sas.com.mk
→e-avtobuska.mk

Travel by car: North Macedonia has a road network with 4 motorways that cover about 242 kilometres, and 911 kilometres of main road. Pay tolls on the motorways can be paid in Macedonian denars and Euros. Speed limits on some parts of the roads are set at maximum 130km/h and roads are clearly signposted. Urban areas have speed limits of 50 km/h, some densely populated areas have limits of 30 km/h. Wearing a seatbelt is compulsory for drivers and passengers, and child seats are obligatory for children up to 150cm. Many gas stations and rest areas provide gasoline (Super (95 octane) and Super plus (98 Octane)), diesel, and liquid petroleum gas. Travelling by car is the best way to explore North Macedonia. Car hire companies offer competitive prices.
→roads.org.mk

Road assistance 24/7:
→amsm.com.mk

Accommodation: All categories of accommodation are available, starting from private holiday homes and private apartments, to five star hotels of major hotel chains. Some private accommodations only accept cash payments. Youth hostels offer competitive prices for budget travellers.

→naitm.org.mk
→exploringmacedonia.com

Money and currency: Legal tender is the Macedonian denar, no other currency is accepted. There are many exchange offices that do not charge commission. A passport is required for currency exchange at any bank. Cash is available 24/7 from cash machines, and all major credit cards are accepted. Prices in stores include VAT, while prices in restaurants include service charge.

Emergency phone numbers:
192 Police
193 Fire service
194 Emergency medical service

Time zone: North Macedonia has CET. Clocks are set to summer time (plus one hour) between March and October.

Electricity: The voltage is 230 volts

PICTURE CREDITS

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- ¹¹ Neighbour countries and former Yugoslavia are excluded from this list, since numbers vary greatly and not all neighbour countries recognize the existence of an ethnic Macedonian minority.
- ¹² Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- ¹³ Source: State Statistic Office of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- ¹⁴ Source: The World Bank.
- ¹⁵ Source: National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- ¹⁶ The official webpage of the UMD is <http://umdiaspora.com/index.php/en/> (accessed 25 February 2018).
- ¹⁷ The official webpage of the Agency of Emigration of the Republic of North Macedonia is <http://www.makemigration.com/iselenistoweb/index.php?page=14> (accessed 25 February 2018).
- ¹⁸ The webpage of the MFA with the link for registration of emigrants is <http://www.mfa.gov.mk/index.php?q=node/792&lang=mk> (accessed 25 February 2018).

IMPRINT

Title

North Macedonia at a Glance

For the publishers

Johannes D. Rey & Norbert Beckmann-Dierkes,
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
Holger-Michael Arndt, CIVIC - Institute for International
Education

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Printing

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Circulation

600 copies

This publication is available at

<http://www.kas.de/mazedonien/mk>

Note

The viewpoints presented in this publication do not reflect the positions of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the CIVIC - Institute for International Education, and are rather personal stances of the authors.

ISBN 978-608-4648-53-6

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