

North Macedonia

Short cultural policy profile

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1. Fact and figures

Political system: Parliamentary democracy with a single chamber parliament

Official language(s): Macedonian; Albanian

	<i>Latest available data</i>	<i>Latest available data minus 5 years</i>
<i>Population on January 1st</i>	1.836.713	/ (The 2021 census was the first after 2002)
<i>GDP in million EUR</i>	3.290.0 (e)	2.749.5 (e)
<i>GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100)</i>	42	37
<i>General government expenditure (in % of GDP)</i>	:	:
<i>Public cultural expenditure</i>	2.6% (2017)	2.0% (2012)
<i>Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP</i>	2.9% (2019)	2.7% (2014)
<i>Public cultural expenditure per Capita</i>	:	:
<i>Share of cultural employment of total employment</i>	3.3 (2020)	3.0 (2015)

Sources: Population on January 1st, *latest data available* / <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00001/default/table?lang=en>

GDP in million EUR, *latest data available* /

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/namq_10_gdp/default/table?lang=en

GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100), *latest data available* /

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00114/default/table?lang=en>

General government expenditure (in % of GDP), *latest data available* /

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00023/default/table?lang=en>

Public cultural expenditure / Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP / Public cultural expenditure per Capita: see also chapter 7.1.1 of the national Compendium profile

Share of cultural employment of total employment / *latest data available*:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/cult_emp_sex/default/table?lang=en

2. Cultural policy system

2.1 Objectives

The general objectives of cultural policy in North Macedonia are provided via the Constitution: civil rights and freedoms, creative autonomy, the obligation to support and develop culture, the right of the different ethnic or national groups to establish institutions for culture and art, the protection of the cultural and historical heritage, etc. During the first decade after gaining independence (1990) there was no general recognisable concept behind the cultural policy system, neither did it follow any particular model. Any developments and changes in the cultural policy "system" were ad hoc and driven by political movement towards decentralisation, multiculturalism etc. The *Law on Culture* (1998) identified some objectives as being of "national interest", such as establishing general conditions for the continuity of culture; creating favourable conditions for outstanding cultural achievements; encouraging cultural diversity; cultural development etc.

In 2004 for the first time a National Programme for Culture 2004-2008 was adopted by the Parliament. According to this National Programme, the basic principles of the cultural policy were:

attainability; diversity; openness; responsibility and flexibility. It also declared that the main cultural policy objectives were: decentralisation, development, protection and (re)creation of the cultural heritage, creativity (with special focus on

young people), creating favourable conditions for outstanding cultural achievements and cultural management.

In May 2018 a new *National Strategy for Cultural Development in the Republic of Macedonia 2018-2022* was adopted by the Parliament. Its general goals are equal cultural rights for all and freedom and diversity for artistic creation and cultural identities. One of its specific goals is structural reform in the field of culture.

The new *National Strategy for Cultural Development* also defines principles of the strategic development: democratisation of culture and cultural democracy; creativity, pluralism, inclusiveness; European context; Liberation in the field of culture, etc.

2.2 Main features

It is very difficult to describe the main concept(s) behind the cultural policy system and its main elements and features in North Macedonia. The real question would be: is there any main concept at all or despite the proclaimed objectives and goals in the official documents the cultural policy system is undergoing a period of improvisation, ignorance of the real problems and termination of reforms?

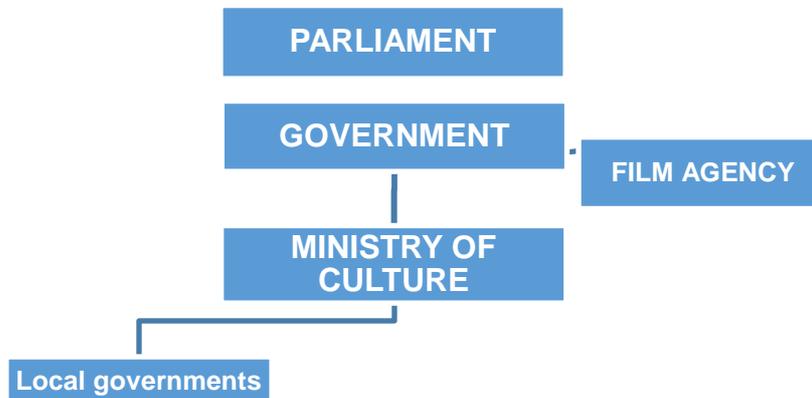
Since 2018, at one time so popular word “reforms in culture” is barely in use in practise and in everyday communication of the Ministry of Culture or the Government. Despite the often public questions on this issue, there is no clear explanation from the Ministry of Culture or the Government about the abandonment of the expected reforms in the field of culture and disregard of the strategic priorities determined in the National Strategy.

The new Government (September 2020) also does not mention the reforms in the field of culture, setting some new “priorities” such as: protection of cultural heritage, international cooperation, youth and culture etc., which were also completely ignored in the past two years.

For example, in December 2003, the government passed the *Decision on the Network of National Institutions in the Field of Culture*. It provided the framework for the future network of the cultural institutions (national and local) and at the same time re-allocated some responsibilities for culture to the municipalities. Although further decentralization was one of the main issues in all strategic documents, the government continued to establish new national institutions without any real concept or expertise. The main motivation was/is not the real cultural necessity but to fulfill the aspirations and needs of the coalition partners in the government.

Also not much (or better to say nothing) was done to broaden the concept of financing culture, especially for the local institutions etc.

2.3 Governance system: Organisational Organigram



2.4 Historical background for the past 70 years

After World War II, the Republic of Macedonia became part of the Yugoslav Federation; therefore, its cultural policy was subject to the state ideology of building up a socialist culture. During that period (1945-1990), cultural policy went through three main development stages:

- a centralist and state-run period (1946 until the mid-1950s) and establishment of first Macedonian cultural institutions;
- a transitional period that lasted until 1974 and contained some elements of decentralisation; and
- from 1975 onwards, a phase of self-management began which defined national and municipal responsibilities for culture including decision making and funding.

As early as 1945, Macedonia has been organised as a multicultural country. The Ministry of Culture financed institutions of the so called *nationalities* (minorities), such as the Theatre of Nationalities (Turkish and Albanian Drama, established in 1947), as well as several cultural associations (amateur and professional), vocal and dance folk groups, etc. Daily newspapers and weekly magazines, monthly children's magazines and radio and TV programmes were available in the respective languages of different cultural communities. Writers, artists, actors, musicians

etc., of all nationalities (Albanians, Turks, Serbs, Roma etc.) were members of the same Macedonian professional associations.

After gaining independence In the 1990s, the cultural policy once again became politically and administratively centralised. The municipalities lost all the competencies they had decades before in the field of culture. There was no explicit cultural policy document which outlined a specific strategy and goals of cultural development. The Constitution and the 1998 Law on Culture provided a certain global orientation toward culture including provisions for civil rights and freedoms, minority rights, the obligation of the government to support and develop culture, etc. However, in practice, there was still a combination of the old and new pragmatism and ad hoc temporary solutions.

The first strategic documents were: National Programme 2004-2008, National Strategy for Cultural Development 2013-2017 and National Strategy for Cultural Development 2018-2022. However, very little from these documents was put into practice.

3. Current cultural affairs

3.1 Key developments

After the Parliamentary elections in 2016 and the end of the “captured state”, the new coalition Government (June 2017) announced its main cultural priorities: freedom of creativity, equality, universal good) and most important principles (accessibility, inclusiveness, cultural democracy, new models of financing culture etc. At the same time, the necessary reforms in the field of culture (as well as the reforms of the whole system) became main cultural policy issues. Most of the issues were elaborated in the new National Strategy for Cultural Development 2018-2022. During 2017/2018 the Ministry of Culture had started with some of the announced reforms establishing 20 expert groups for revising the most important issues in the global cultural policy (decentralisation, new laws in the field of culture, transformation of the Ministry of Culture, international cooperation, cultural industries, protection of the cultural heritage, museums, “Skopje 2014” etc.). However, in 2018, although most of the working groups delivered their analysis and suggestions, the expected continuance with the reforms had suddenly stopped. Since 2018 the word “reforms in culture” was barely in use in the everyday communica-

tion of the Ministry of Culture or the Government. Despite the often public demands on this issue, there was no clear explanation about the reforms from the Ministry of Culture or the Government.

Although the key issue of the National Strategy, the new Government (September 2020) also does not mention the reforms in the field of culture, setting some new “priorities” such as: protection of cultural heritage, international cooperation, youth and culture etc.

In December 2020 an online Peer Review on the cultural policy of North Macedonia was exercised by the Council of Europe expert group. The following main challenges have been identified:

- the need to reform public administration to improve transparency on management and spending,
- to improve data collection on the culture and creative sectors,
- to digitize procedure,
- to operationalize policy vision,
- to reward merit,
- to value professional expertise over political appointments.

However, nothing of this Peer Review gained public (or media) attention: not a word, or comment, from the Ministry or the Government, nor from the media.

The main challenges still are the “forgotten” cultural reforms and ignorance of the key priorities underlined in the National Strategy 2018-2022 and its Action plan. Even a superficial analysis shows that not more than 10% of the Action plan has been fulfilled. Nevertheless, the policy makers – the Ministry of Culture and the Government - seem completely indifferent.

On the other hand, the public awareness concerning the cultural problems has been on the lowest level in the past five years. Culture is almost never mentioned in the media, there are no public debates about its main issues and/or developments.

3.2 Key themes

Most relevant themes are the same themes that occupied public attention throughout these five years: culture reforms, Skopje 2014, the draft-Law on Exercising the Public Interest in Culture etc.

The so called “Project Skopje 2014” was one of the cornerstones of the oppositional critics during the period of the “captured state” (2007-2016) and was a strong argument against the criminal and corrupted regime. The promise that the new democratic government will consequently deal with this “project” gained sympathies from most of the Skopje citizens and voters in general. In 2017, the new Minister of Culture formed an expert group to analyse all aspects of the whole project and to suggest solutions for each part of it. Although the working group managed to deliver 15 elaborates for the mayor monuments, nothing of the suggested measures were accepted by the Government. The working group was gradually suspended after only a year and a half without finishing its job. The estimates are that nearly 800 million euro was spent for the kitsch monuments and few “neo-romantic” buildings (which are in a state of decomposition), but nobody has answered for it yet.

Following the general critics on anachronistic *Law on Culture* (1998), a draft *Law on Exercising the Public Interest in Culture* was prepared in 2018. It foresees additional reforms and completely new approach to the annual funding in the field of culture. However, the draft of this new Law is in the Parliament for more than four years and hasn’t been put on its agenda yet.

As it was said before, themes like cultural rights and ethics, role of artists and cultural professionals, digital policy and developments, cultural diversity, culture and social inclusion etc., have no relevance in the public sphere.

3.3 International Cultural Cooperation

The Ministry of Culture (in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) is the main body responsible for international, bilateral and multilateral cultural co-operation, which is realised through international conventions, other international agreements, bilateral agreements and programmes for co-operation. Bilateral cultural co-operation agreements include educational and scientific programmes as part of framework agreements that are signed for 1-3 years. Therefore, these agreements are the major instrument in international cooperation. Other instruments such as cooperation treaties, co-production agreements or state guarantees are also in use. So far, the Ministry of Culture has signed bilateral agreements for cultural cooperation with over 50 countries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for implementing and monitoring all the international (bilateral or multilateral) agreements and conventions. The Ministry of Culture (with UNESCO National Commission) and the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, depending on the field of interest, are responsible for implementing and monitoring the conventions in the field of culture, such as the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The Convention was ratified on May 22, 2007. In the past several years UNESCO has supported 15 projects in the fields of culture, education, science etc., and 8 grants for young researchers, professionals in the protection of cultural heritage etc.

The National Strategy for Cultural Development 2018-2022 demands that international cultural cooperation should be subject of a certain strategy and not by ad-hoc initiatives, but nothing has been done so far.

4. Cultural Institutions

4.1 Overview

According to the government's *Decision on the Network of National Institutions in the Field of Culture* (2003), a division of jurisdiction was made and 63 of 115 cultural institutions gained the status local institutions. It meant that local authorities were responsible to provide financing of basic costs (salaries, running costs etc.) of these institutions. However, it was never put into practice since the Ministry of culture continued to finance these local institutions through a mechanism called monthly block-donations. This was usually justified due to the very unstable financial situation in most of the municipalities. There is no data on private institutions.

This kind of financial dependence of the cultural institutions is one of the weakest points in the Macedonian cultural system. Combined with other modes of legal interventions (appointing directors of the national institutions, the governing boards, etc.), it gives the Ministry of culture almost complete control over the cultural institutions. As well as before, 2021 again saw two examples of bad practice of appointing directors in cultural centers in Strumica and Tetovo where "political" interest prevailed over the professional competence.

On the other hand, the Government itself in the past 15 years has established a number of national cultural institutions without having any expert opinion (demanded by law) or real cultural necessity but to fulfill the aspirations and needs of the coalition partners in the government.

4.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

Domain	Cultural Institution (Subdomain)	Public Sector		Private Sector	
		Number (YEAR, latest available data)	Number (YEAR, latest available data minus 5 years)	Number (YEAR, latest available data)	Number (YEAR, latest available data minus 5 years)
Cultural Heritage	<i>Cultural heritage sites (recognised)</i>	17 000 (2003)	/	/	/
	<i>Archaeological sites</i>	4 260 (2003)	/	/	/
Museums	<i>Museum institutions</i>	33 (2018)	27 (2013)	/	/
Archives	<i>Archive institutions</i>	9 (2018)	/	/	/
Visual arts	<i>Public art galleries / exhibition halls</i>	69 (2017)	/	/	/
Performing arts	<i>Scenic and stable spaces for theatre</i>	/	/	/	/
	<i>Concert houses</i>	7 (2018)	/	/	/
	<i>Theatre companies</i>	17 (2021)	15 (2018)	/	/
	<i>Dance and ballet companies</i>	1 (2020)	1 (2015)	/	/

	<i>Symphonic orchestras</i>	1 (2020)	3 (2010)	/	/
Libraries	<i>Libraries</i>	175 (2019)	/	/	/
Audiovisual	<i>Cinemas</i>	15 (2019)	14 (2015)	/	/
	<i>Broadcasting organisations</i>	107 (2019)	/	/	/
Interdisciplinary	<i>Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses</i>	15 (2021)	/	/	/
Others (please explain)	/	/	/	/	/

5. Cultural Funding

5.1 Overview

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for distributing public funds for culture on the basis of an annual plan, which is developed by the Ministry at the end of the year for the following year. The allocation of the overall state budget to different sectors is prescribed by law (annual Law on the National Budget). Culture's share of the state budget in 2002 to 2006 ranged from 2.40% to 1.80%. In 2005, culture's share of the state budget was 2.227% etc.

The Ministry of Culture provides annual funding to the national cultural (and local) institutions (salaries, investments, running costs, insurance of equipment, buildings, exhibits, etc.) and for specific programs/projects on the basis of annual competition. The amount of money reserved for the salaries of those employed on a full time basis in cultural institutions represented a share of 62% of the total budget for culture in 1992. This figure decreased to 59% in 1995, 39% in 2000 and 35% in 2002 and 45.12% in 2005. In 2005, the structure of the cultural budget was: 45.12% for salaries; 2.65% for heating; 0.99% for insurance and other services to the institutions; 2.65% for capital investments (reconstructions, equipment etc.) and 44.24 % for programs and projects. In the 2020 budget this share for salaries of the cultural institutions was 38%.

Culture's share of the central state budget in 2020 was 0.16% (0.12% in 2019) which represents almost the lowest percentage in the past 20 years. On the other hand, the increase of the cultural budget in 2020 is almost 47% compared to the budget in 2019.

There is no data available for cultural funding of local governments or private entities (if any).

The major change in cultural funding was foreseen by the draft *Law on Exercising the Public Interest in Culture* that was prepared in 2018. It foresees additional reforms and completely new approach to the annual funding in the field of culture. However, the draft of this new Law is in the Parliament for more than four years and hasn't been put on its agenda yet.

There are no non-public funding bodies for culture and creativity and there are no studies or surveys regarding private funding for culture.

Due to the economic and energetic crisis, the state budget was rebalanced in May 2022 and the cultural budget was cut for over 30% (1.2 million EUR).

5.2 Public cultural expenditure by level of government

Table 2: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, in national currency and in EUR, 2021/2016

Level of government	Total cultural expenditure in 2021			Total cultural expenditure in 2016		
	In MKD	In mio. EUR	% share of total	In MKD	In mio. EUR*	% share of total
State (central, federal) Ministry of Culture	3 568 853 000	58.5	1.43	3 555 000 000	58.2	2.1
Regional (provincial, Länder, etc.)	/	/	/	/	/	/
Local (municipal, incl. counties)	/	/	/	/	/	/
TOTAL	/	/	/	/	/	100%

Source: Ministry of Culture, Report 2021

Note: * At the date of expenditure

5.3 Public cultural expenditure per sector

Table 3: Public cultural expenditure*: by sector, in national currency and in EUR, 2021/2018

Field / Domain	Total cultural expenditure in 2021			Total cultural expenditure in 2018	
	In MKD	In EUR	% share of total	IN MKD	In EUR
Cultural Heritage	105 110 587	1.7 mio.	3.15	441 400 000	7.2 mio.
Museums	113 764 402	1.8 mio.	3.41	420 300 000	6.9 mio.
Archives	/	/	/	/	/
Visual Arts	27 436 105	449 772	0.82	37 100 000	608.196
Performing Arts	268 743 918	4.4 mio.	8.06	1 629 100 000	26.7 mio.
Audiovisual and Multimedia	/	/	/	/	/
Interdisciplinary Socioculture, cultural relations abroad, cultural education	14 893 050	244 148	0.44	/	/
Not covered by the above domains: salaries 49.51%; runn. costs 3.93%; investmn. 6.56%; subsidies 10.66%; other programme expendit. 13.46%	2 802 950 938	45 950 015	84.12	88 000 000 162 251 531	1.4 mio. 2.6 mio.
TOTAL	3 332 899 000	54 637 688	100%	/	/

Source: Ministry of Culture, Report 2021

6. Legislation on culture

6.1 Overview of national cultural legislation

The legal framework in the Republic of North Macedonia that regulates the cultural processes and work of its institutions consists in a set of laws, by-laws, strategies and yearly strategic operating plans of the Ministry of Culture.

The main law in the field of culture still is the Law on Culture (1998) which was meant to be a unified law for the cultural field. When it was passed in 1998, partial co-ordination was achieved between the existing constitutional system and the new social, political and economic conditions in the country. It also guaranteed the freedom of creative work and related rights; made possible the introduction of a civil concept of culture; an equal status for public and private entities that work in the field of culture; introduction of a decentralised system for culture; financing activities in the "national interest" through an open competition, etc. However, it is important to note that past experience with the Law on Culture revealed many weaknesses and pointed out the necessity for amendments. It became clear that a re-evaluation of the Law on Culture was necessary. Subsequently, the Law on Culture was amended 17 times.

The National Strategy for Cultural Development has stated that the Law on Culture has become old-fashioned, rigid and anachronous. According to this Strategy a new Law on exercising the public interest in culture was prepared (2019) but still awaits the Parliamentary procedure.

A number of other general laws and regulations also influence culture and cultural policy: Labour Law, Tax and Custom Regulations, Law on NGO's and Foundations, Anti-trust Laws, Law on the Implementation of the State Budget etc.

6.2 Overview of international cultural legislation

The Republic of North Macedonia has ratified the following UN conventions which are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture: Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention; Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Properties; Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage; Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions; Universal Copyright Convention, with Appendix Declaration relating to Articles XVII and

Resolution concerning Article XI and Universal Copyright Convention as revised in Paris on July 24, 1971, with Appendix Declaration relating to Article XVII and the Resolution concerning Article XI; Convention for the Protection of Producers of Phonograms against Unauthorized Duplication of their Phonograms; Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization.

The Republic of North Macedonia has been a member of UNESCO since 28 June 1993. It ratified various conventions including the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2007) and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2006). Between 2016 and 2017, UNESCO's Participation Programme approved 5 projects that MK participated in, including 1 regional project. Lake Ohrid region is a World Heritage Site since 1979. Bitola became a UNESCO Creative City of Film in 2015 (part of UNESCO Creative Cities Network). The country is included in the UNESCO/EU action to Fight Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property.