



National report on state of the art of cultural policies for the integration of migrants

The Republic of North Macedonia

Abstract – Synthesis (page 1)

An overview of the main elements written in the report

- [Introduction: Considering cultural policies within integration policies in general](#) 2
- [National cultural policies for the integration of migrants](#) 3
- [History and general framework of cultural policies](#) 5
- [The current situation regarding cultural policies & Best practices on the integration of migrants through artistic/creative projects aimed at cultural integration](#) 8



- Introduction: Considering cultural policies within integration policies in general
 - A brief reminder on main data¹ on migrants (main communities within the country, data on asylum seekers and refugee population) and main identified needs
 - The general framework of migrants' integration policies in your country
 - An introductory focus on one dimension of integration: cultural integration (what are the main issues concerning cultural policies)
 - Why integrating migrants through culture is fundamental and how cultural policies must be supportive of the integration of migrants

The Republic of Macedonia declared as a sovereign and independent state on September 8, 1991, by [a vote of the citizens of Macedonia](#). [The Constitution](#) of the Republic of North Macedonia is a codified constitution outlining North Macedonia's system of government and basic human rights. It was adopted in the Parliament of the then-Republic of Macedonia on 17 November 1991.

“The Government of the Republic of Northern Macedonia will promote, protect and advance human rights in the Republic of Macedonia and will create institutional capacities for their effective protection and responsibility of all those who will try to violate human rights.”

<https://vlada.mk/node/18046>

North Macedonia became a member state of the [United Nations](#) on April 8, 1993. North Macedonia had become a [NATO](#) member in March 2020. The Republic of North Macedonia is a multicultural country. According to their ethnic affiliation, 58.44% percent of the population declared themselves as Macedonians, 24.30% percent as Albanians, 3.86% as Turks, 2.53% as Roma, 0.47% as Vlachs, 1.30% as Serbs, 0.87% as Bosniaks, and others.

By linking the East with the West with its geographical position the Republic of Macedonia became part of the Western Balkan route for thousands of refugees through the country.

Macedonia, because of the small wages and the high percentage of unemployment, is not interesting for the migrants and refugees as a final destination and they use it as a transit country to reach an EU state.

In 2020 North Macedonia has 314 refugees, an 11.3% decline from 2019. Thousands of refugees from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and other countries, who entered North Macedonia from Greece, continue their journey in the other European countries.

The Parliament of Republic of North Macedonia adopted the [“Resolution on Migration Policy and the Action Plan for 2021-2025”](#) to achieve a more favorable protection environment, supported by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund project “Evidence based migration policy planning and discourse”.

¹ prefer official sources such as ministries or statistical offices - if there is a lack of data collection, report it.



Macedonia has adopted and applied all international laws related to refugees and migrants and acts accordingly. Because, as we have pointed out that refugees and migrants are mostly transiting through Macedonia, some other policies for their involvement that will correspond to the local context of the state are not developed.

In addition to the universal documents, Macedonia must adopt some strategies that will be of local significance and that can successfully integrate asylum seekers in the society if they express interest. The biggest problem in Macedonia is the economic situation that neither motivates refugees and migrants to stay here, nor does it create pressure for state authorities to create different strategies. Macedonia must learn from good / bad stories both in the region and wider from other countries in order to be ready to respond to all the challenges that possibly will emerge further.

- **National cultural policies for the integration of migrants**

Cultural policies linked to the social inclusion of migrants (language courses, artistic/creative practices)

Culture can be defined as all the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation. Culture has been called "the way of life for an entire society." As such, it includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, art. Culture – set of patterns of human activity within a community or social group and the symbolic structures that give significance to such activity. Customs, laws, dress, architectural style, social standards and traditions are all examples of cultural elements.

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Cultural Rights are rights related to art and culture, both understood in a large sense. The objective of these rights is to guarantee that people and communities have an access to culture and can participate in the culture of their election. Cultural rights are human rights that aim at assuring the enjoyment of culture and its components in conditions of equality, human dignity and non-discrimination.

They are rights related to themes such as language; cultural and artistic production; participation in cultural life; cultural heritage; intellectual property rights; author's rights; minorities and access to culture, among others.

Cultural rights protect the rights for each person, individually and in community with others, as well as groups of people, to develop and express their humanity, their world view and the meanings they give to their existence and their development through, inter alia, values, beliefs, convictions, languages, knowledge and the arts, institutions and ways of life. Cultural rights also protect access to heritage and resources that allow such identification and development processes to take place.

The mandate on cultural rights aim is to promote the conditions allowing all people without discrimination to access, participate and contribute to all aspects of cultural life in a continuously developing manner. Taking into consideration various instruments and studies, cultural rights relate to a broad range of issues, such as expression and creation, including in diverse material and non-



material forms of art; information and communication; language; identity and belonging to multiple, diverse and changing communities; development of specific world visions and the pursuit of specific ways of life; education and training; access, contribution and participation in cultural life; the conduct of cultural practices and access to tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The Republic of North Macedonia is committed to efficient migration processes management and pursues active and consistent migration policy, featured with a due care for the national, social, economic, and cultural development of the country. This policy is based on principles of respect for and protection of human rights and freedoms, solidarity, long-term macroeconomic benefits and historical responsibility. Endeavoring to taking advantage of benefits of legal migration movements, and aiming at expanding free economic initiative and free circulation of capital, pursuing its policy of legal and free migration, the Republic of North Macedonia intends to create prerequisites for reduction of the intensity of migration and to utilize its great development potentials by promoting efficient system of issuance of work permits and by maintaining a transparent framework for acquiring Macedonian nationality.

In this context, foreigners staying in the country are guaranteed fundamental human rights and freedoms, and are given the opportunity to temporarily or permanently reside in the country and be integrated into the Macedonian society, including the right to seek asylum. The main goal of the migration policy of the Republic of North Macedonia is to create a comprehensive and consistent approach for efficient migration processes management in the field of legal, forced, and illegal international migration.

Measures and activities are foreseen focused on the attainment of the goals of the migration policy of the Republic of North Macedonia, which on their part will enable efficient and coordinated implementation of the policy.

The following activities and/or measures are foreseen in the field of **visa regime**: Further harmonization of the visa issuance procedures and of the legislation with the *acquis communautaire* in the field of visa regime; Continual enhancement of the institutional capacity in the field of visa regime; Further promotion of the national visa IT system.

The following activities and/or measures are foreseen in the field of **stay and employment of foreigners and their integration**: Monitoring and harmonization of national legislation in the field of stay, employment, and integration of foreigners with the legislation of the European Union; 11 x Establishment and development of a new central database on foreigners covering asylum, migration, and visas (software and hardware); Continual promotion of procedures for employment of foreigners; Upgrading the procedure for determination of the status of stateless persons; Further institutional capacity building in the field of stay, employment and integration of foreigners, as well as running continual training on human resources;

The following activities and/or measures are foreseen in the field of **asylum**: Monitoring and harmonization of the national legislation in accordance with changes in the field of asylum under the legislation of the European Union; Continual advancement of the procedure for issuance of identification documents to persons seeking protection from the Republic of Macedonia;



The following activities and/or measures are foreseen in the field of **integration of foreigners**: The Centre for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners in the Republic of Macedonia has been established and has started its work, for purposes of more efficient implementation of the integration activities.

Programs intended to stimulate dialogue between immigrants and domicile population, in order to overcome problems of xenophobia and discrimination; Projects on sustainable development for refugees have been started.

The general objectives of cultural policy are provided by 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.

The Law on Culture (1998) specifies some cultural objectives as being of “national interest”, e.g. establishing general conditions for achieving continuity in culture, creating conditions for outstanding cultural achievements and their protection, encouraging cultural diversity, protecting and developing the cultural identity of different communities, cultural development etc.

On the other hand, according to the [National Programme for Culture 2004-2008](#), the main cultural policy objectives were: decentralization, development, protect and (re)creation of the cultural heritage, creativity with special focus on young people, cultural management.

- **History and general framework of cultural policies**

History of main laws, national action plans, measures or programmes and responsible bodies

The most important human rights agreements are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The preparation of the covenants was initiated right after the creation of the Universal Declaration, and they were approved by the UN General Assembly in 1966. The Universal Declaration and these two covenants form the foundation of the UN human rights system.

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“The Government of the Republic of Northern Macedonia will promote, protect and advance human rights in the Republic of Macedonia and will create institutional capacities for their effective protection and responsibility of all those who will try to violate human rights.”

Strategic documents in regards to cultural policies and integration of migrant in the Republic of North Macedonia are:



- [NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT OF ONE SOCIETY AND INTERCULTURALISM](#)
- [NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA IN THE PERIOD 2018-2022](#)
- [STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE 2019 - 2021](#)
- [STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE 2021 – 2023](#)
- [STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE 2022 – 2024](#)

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Economic, social and cultural rights are socio-economic human rights, such as the right to education, the right to housing, the right to adequate life, the right to health, the rights of victims and the right to science and culture. Economic, social and cultural rights are recognized and protected in international and regional human rights instruments.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes a number of economic, social and cultural rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) is the primary international legal source of economic, social and cultural rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women recognize and protect many of the economic, social and cultural rights recognized in the ICESCR in relation to children and women.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination prohibits discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin in relation to a number of economic, social and cultural rights.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also prohibits all forms of disability discrimination, including the denial of reasonable accommodation in connection with the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a historic document which outlined the rights and freedoms everyone is entitled to. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is an international document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 that enshrines the rights and freedoms of all human beings. A foundational text in the history of human and civil rights, the Declaration consists of 30 articles detailing an individual's "basic rights and fundamental freedoms" and affirming their universal character as inherent, inalienable, and applicable to all human beings. Adopted as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations", the UDHR commits nations to recognize all humans as being "born free and equal in dignity and rights" regardless of "nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

Macedonia have ratified [the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR\)](#) in 1994 and so is required to report to the Committee. Article 15 of the Covenant recognizes the right of everyone to participate in cultural life, enjoy the benefits of scientific progress, and to benefit from



the protection of the moral and material rights to any scientific discovery or artistic work they have created. The latter clause is sometimes seen as requiring the protection of intellectual property, but the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights interprets it as primarily protecting the moral rights of authors and "proclaim[ing] the intrinsically personal character of every creation of the human mind and the ensuing durable link between creators and their creations". It thus requires parties to respect the right of authors to be recognized as the creator of a work. The material rights are interpreted as being part of the right to an adequate standard of living, and "need not extend over the entire lifespan of an author."

Implementing the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child relating to the Initial Report, in 2005, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a Decision establishing the National Commission drafting the [National Action Plan](#) on Children's Rights.

The National Commission on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Macedonia has the competences to follow the situation with children's rights in the Republic of Macedonia; then to continually follow the implementation of the 2006-2015 National Plan of Action on Children's Rights in the Republic of Macedonia and of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; upon request of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to prepare materials considered at thematic.

The general objectives of cultural policy are provided by 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.

The Law on Culture (1998) specifies some cultural objectives as being of "national interest", e.g. establishing general conditions for achieving continuity in culture, creating conditions for outstanding cultural achievements and their protection, encouraging cultural diversity, protecting and developing the cultural identity of different communities, cultural development etc.

According to the National Program for Culture 2004-2008 (which was the first of its kind in Macedonia), the main cultural policy objectives were:

- Decentralization
- Development
- Protection and (re)creation of the cultural heritage
- Creativity, with special focus on young people
- Creating favorable conditions for outstanding cultural achievements and
- Cultural management

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

- Attainability
- Diversity
- Openness
- Responsibility and
- Flexibility

In 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, as follows:

- Democratization of culture and cultural democracy
- Creativity, pluralism, inclusiveness
- European context
- Liberation in the field of culture etc

This document also formulates the basic principles of the cultural strategy and the main directions of the reforms, the basic instruments for realization of the priorities, the necessary reforms in the Ministry of Culture, strategic plans for each cultural domain etc.

The document is followed by an Action plan for implementation of the Strategy, including necessary measures, expected effects and indicators, as well as terms and financial indicators.

Ministry of Culture performs works and duties related to:

- Monitoring, analyzing and proposing acts and measures for development and improvement of culture;
- Organization, financing and development of network of national institutions and financing of programs and projects of national interest in this area;
- Protection of cultural heritage;
- Publishing, music, artistic, movie, gallery, library, archive, museum and cinema areas, houses of culture and culture mediation;
- Protection of copyright and related rights;
- Monumental celebration of events and acknowledged persons of national interest;
- Performing surveillance under their authority; and
- Performing other duties as stipulated by Law.

Strategic documents:

- [*The Republic of Macedonia ratified Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights on 13 July 2004.*](#)
- [*The Republic of Macedonia ratified the European Social Charter on 31 March 2005 and the revised European Social Charter, which entered into force on 1 March 2012.*](#)
- [*The Republic of Macedonia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol on 29 December 2011.*](#)
- [*The Law on Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination was adopted in 2010.*](#)
- [*The Government of the Republic of Macedonia has also adopted a National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnic Affiliation, Age, Mental or Physical Disability and Gender 2012–2015.*](#)

- **The current situation regarding cultural policies & Best practices on the integration of migrants through artistic/creative projects aimed at cultural integration**

What are the current cultural policies in your country dedicated to migrants (any policies dedicated to them?) and focus on policies specifically on artistic and creative practices

Data on migrants' cultural practices

In the light of these data, what are the challenges/issues of cultural policies



The Republic of Macedonia is on the Balkan route of the migrants towards western European countries. Only limited/small number of migrants expressed their interest and willingness to remain in the country. The migrants coming at the border, are accommodated at migrant centers located in Gevgelija, Skopje and Kumanovo. While there, they have been supported to fully exercise their cultural, religious and other needs/rights.

Macedonia has adopted and applied all international laws related to refugees and migrants and acts accordingly. The refugees and migrants are mostly transiting through Macedonia, some other policies for their involvement that will correspond to the local context of the state are not developed.

Taking into account that the movement of the migrants is limited and not possible out of the migrant centers, there are no policies defined and valid for the migrants out of the camps.

The Republic of Macedonia recognizes the importance of developing local and national cultural policies in regards to migrants integration but does not possess well-structured programs. The possible reasons for this: the number of refugees and migrants in Macedonia has been relatively small for the past few years, and secondly, there is a lack of motivation and lack of initiation to develop this kind of programs.

There are few examples of short term projects and initiatives organized by both the NGO sector and civil society, which have no long term impact, as all activities stop after the financial resources are depleted. Cultural practices are limited within the transit centers, based on their interest, mainly ad hoc, depending on the number of migrants at the camp at the current/specific moment.

I. Best practices on the integration of migrants through artistic/creative projects aimed at cultural integration

1. *exemplary initiatives/projects implemented by local actors focusing on artistic/creative projects aimed at cultural integration.*

The Republic of Macedonia as a transit country for the migrants coming from Asia and Middle east, during the period of 2015 and 2016 has faced an enormous influx of migrants, and approximately 500.000 people got to the border between Macedonia and Greece. After that, as well as measures imposed by the government and EU, the number of migrants has decreased and for all of them coming to Macedonia, it is only transit destination towards Western European countries. During their stay, they are accommodated at the transit center and they are allowed to leave the center only in exceptional cases. They can participate in educational and social related activities only at their premises for temporarily stay and therefore we can not report for any other best practice with impact in the long run.

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