

Highlights of the draft Assessment report for Skopje, North Macedonia

General highlights about the informal/illegal constructions in North Macedonia

The Republic of North Macedonia belongs to the European continent, located at the heart of the Balkan Peninsula. It has approx. 2.1 million inhabitants and are of 25.713 km². Skopje is the capital city, with 506,926 inhabitants (according to 2002 count).

The country consists of 80 local self-government units (municipalities) and the city of Skopje as special form of local self-government unit. The City of Skopje consists of 10 municipalities, as follows:

1. Municipality of Aerodrom,
2. Municipality of Butel,
3. Municipality of Gazi Baba,
4. Municipality of Gorche Petrov,
5. Municipality of Karpos,
6. Municipality of Kisela Voda,
7. Municipality of Saraj,
8. Municipality of Centar,
9. Municipality of Chair and
10. Municipality of Shuto Orizari.

During the transition period, the Republic of North Macedonia faced challenges in different sectors. The urban development is one of the sectors that was directly affected from the informal/illegally constructed buildings. According to statistical data, in 2019 there was a registration of 886 illegally built objects. Most of these objects (98.4 %) are built on private land.

Considering the challenge for the urban development of the country, in 2011 the Government proposed, and the Parliament adopted a Law on the treatment of unlawful constructions. This Law introduced a legalization process.

Institutions in charge for implementation of the legalization procedure are the municipalities in the City of Skopje (*depending on the territory where the object is constructed*) and the Ministry of Transport and Communication.

The **Ministry of Transport and Communication** (MTC) deals with constructions with significance for the Republic (*power plants, highways, and other infrastructure i.e. category 1 constructions*) as well as structures/objects belonging to facilities of health care institutions for tertiary health care and electronic communication networks and equipment.

Local self-government units (municipalities) are in charge for the procedure for local significance constructions (*constructions from the second category*) including buildings for individual and collective housing, and for structures belonging to medical institutions for primary and secondary healthcare protection.

According to MTC website publications, as of 2011 360,000 requests for determination of the legal status of illegal constructions were submitted. With the extensions of deadline for submission of the request, as of 30.03.2016 an additional 80.000 were submitted. While from the beginning of the process until 30.03.2016, 147.000 unlawful constructions/objects obtained a legal status.

Since the opportunity provided by this Law was not used by all citizens, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia proposed to the Parliament a new Law for legalization. This “new” law is in adoption procedure in the Parliament.

General highlights about the Assessment report on informal settlements in City of Skopje

The notion “**Informal settlement**” is not recognized in the Macedonian Law for legislation (Law on the treatment of unlawful constructions), neither any mapping nor delineation of informal settlements is in place for the city of Skopje. From this point of view, the report focused on illegal/informal constructions. As a case were selected two settlements in the City of Skopje. These two settlements were selected because the data about housing, education, employment, and legalization process have been recently collected through other projects.

The Assessment report, among other details elaborates:

1. COUNTRY INFORMATION, general country information, political and decisions making organization of the country, information about illegal constructions in the country with statistical data for the period 2009-2019,
2. CITY INFORMATION, general background for the city of Skopje, illegal/informal constructions in the city of Skopje with statistical data for the period 2009-2019,
3. SETTLEMENTS IN THE CITY OF SKOPJE THAT FACING INFORMAL CONSTRUCTIONS, information for the Shuto Orizari settlements and Topaana Roma settlement. Information’s from the surveys from other project used for the report. These information’s include situation with housing issues (quality of houses, legalization process, ownership, housing and infrastructure problems reported), employment, education and health.
4. INSTITUTIONS IN CHARGE FOR THE LEGALISATION PROCESS, information about institutions and their role in the legalization process;
5. NATIONAL LEGISLATION, information about the national legislation related to illegally constructed objects;
6. FORMALISATION EFFORTS, few projects/policy measures connected to legalization of illegally constructed objects elaborated;
7. PROCESS OF LEGALISATION elaborated the flow of the procedure for legalization, fee to be paid, institutions involved, etc.
8. COVID-19 IMPACT ON SELECTED SETTLEMENTS. General socio-economic impact in the country provided. In addition, as attachment provided the Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in North Macedonia, prepared by UNDP is attached as Annex IV of the Assessment report.

In absence of information, socio-economic impacts specifically to the selected settlement is not possible.

9. RESPONSE MEASURES TO COVID-19. Information about central government socio-economic measures taken are provided. Measures taken in the level of municipality where the selected settlements belong, provided as well.
10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES. Recommendations related only to measures for formalization/legalization of illegally constructed objects.

Challenges

For development of the Assessment report, the following challenges were faced :

- Absence of systematic official data relevant for the Assessment report. This gap was filled with the data from projects financed from European Union collected recently through surveys;
- COVID-19 restrictions made it difficult to establish contact with government and other stakeholders engaged in the activities related to housing for vulnerable group of citizens, as well as citizens living the selected settlements.

Overall, the information provided in the first draft of the Assessment report may be a starting point for developing a Recovery Action Plan. Involvement of the local authorities from the City of Skopje is crucial for validation and revision of the information contained in the first draft of the Assessment report as well as to provide additional information.