

Post COVID-19 Recovery in Informal Settlements in the UNECE Region

Main Findings of the Draft Assessment Reports City of Skopje

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- **City of Skopje, capital of North Macedonia**
 - **506.926** inhabitants, **146.566** households, **163.748** dwellings (2002 census)
 - Territory 571 km²
 - **Special form** of local self government unit, consisted of **10 municipalities**
- **Informal constructions in Skopje**
 - Started when the country was part of SFR Yugoslavia
 - The **1963 earthquake**, left 80.000 citizens homeless and 70.000 citizens in heavy damaged buildings
 - **State statistical data:**
 - **721** illegally built construction in **2009**
 - **153** informal constructions in **2019**
- **Informal settlements**
 - Not recognized by the national legislation as **category**, therefore no delineation data exists
 - Two neighborhoods analyzed in the Report, where informal constructions exists and vulnerable group of population are living there (**Roma community**)

Legal and Institutional Framework

- **Law on treatment of unlawful constructed objects (adopted in 2011)**
 - Regulate conditions and the procedure for **determination of legal status** of illegally constructed objects
 - Deadline for submission of Requests for determination of legal status until **31.12.2018**
 - Deals with constructions build illegally before **March 2011**
 - The procedure for legalization/formalization shall be initiated by holder of the object
 - Provides **amnesty** for the proceedings related to illegally constructed buildings
 - Ministry of Transport and Communication (**MTC**) data:
 - **440.000** Requests for legalization/formalization submitted as of March 2016
 - **147.000 illegally constructed** objects got legal status as of March 2016
- **New Law** in adoption procedure. Will deal with illegally constructed objects constructed until **1st October 2019**.

Legal and Institutional Framework

Main players in the legalization process

❖ Central level

■ Ministry of Transport and Communication

- On behalf of the Government prepared the Law and adopted bylaws
- Implements the procedure for determining the legal status of objects of importance for the Republic (first category constructions)
- Determines standards for incorporating illegal constructed buildings into urban planning documentation;
- Decides on filed appeals on the Decisions for determination of legal status for illegally constructed objects, issued by the Local self-government units

❖ Local level

■ Local self-government units

- In charge for implementation of the procedure for determination of legal status (legalization) for the **second category** objects
- Within the City of Skopje, **Municipalities in the City of Skopje** in charge for implementation of the procedure for determination of legal status (legalization) for the second category objects

Legal and Institutional Framework

Other institutions involved in the legalization process

❖ Agency for real estate cadaster

- In charge for **registration of real estate rights** into the real estate cadastre at the end of the formalisation
- Prepare **Geodetic reports** for social categories of citizens and persons with low incomes

❖ Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning

- Provide opinion for legalization for objects, which are built within the boundaries of **nature protection areas and water protected zones**

❖ Directorate for protection of cultural heritage

- Provide opinion for legalization for objects, which are built within the boundaries of **protected cultural heritage and archeological sites**

❖ Ministry of Economy

- Provide opinion for legalization for objects, which are built in area where is performed or planned **exploration of mineral resources**

❖ Civil Aviation Agency

- Provide opinion for legalization for objects, which are built in **airport protection zones**

Legal and Institutional Framework

Other institutions involved in the legalization process

❖ Ministry of Interior Affairs

- Provide opinion for legalization for objects, which are built within **border crossing zones** within radius of 100 meters from the border line

❖ Courts

- Competent for imposing the **misdemeanors sanctions** deriving from the Law

❖ State Commission for deciding in administrative procedure and labour relationship procedure in the second degree

- Decides on filed **appeals** on the Decisions for determination of legal status for illegally constructed objects, issued by the Ministry of Transport and Communication

Settlements in City of Skopje facing informal constructions



❖ Settlements in Shuto Orizari

- Located in the northern part of the City, approximately 5 km from the main square
- Populated after the earthquake of 1963. Served as **home to Roma families who had lost their homes as a result of the earthquake**;
- In nowadays, Shuto Orizari is one of the ten municipalities that make up the City of Skopje
- Partly urbanized settlements. Process of urbanization ongoing.

❖ Topaana neighborhood

- Part of the Municipality of Chair. Chair Municipality is one of the ten municipalities in the City of Skopje
- Populated by Roma community
- Process of urbanization on going

COVID-19 Impact in the Informal Settlement



■ Health impact

- No specific data about the health impact on selected settlements
- Overall the country as of December 7th 2020, **67.968** have been confirmed, and **1.924 deaths** attributed to COVID-19

■ Socio-economic impact

- Labor layoffs, reduced working hours and wages or a combination of them (formal & informal economy)
- Difficulties and delays of loan payments due to unemployment and poverty
- Reduced inflows of remittances, as migrants did not visited the country
- Education process is conducted on-line, thus it impacted the family economy (additional equipment's, heating), as well as the normal working process of parents

■ Impact on formalisation/legalisation process

- COVID-19 working restrictions in the public administrations impacted the individual procedures for formalization
- COVID-19 delayed the parliamentary elections, thus indirectly delayed the adoption of the new Law for legalization

1. Balancing the needs with the possibilities

The overall fall in the consumptions, means fall in collection of taxes, thus creating gaps in local authority budgets.

2. Socio-economic effects may drop the interest for legalization

Due to other socio-economic problems created from COVID-19, legalization of houses may not be priority for families living in houses without regulated legal status

3. Vaccination of population

Fake news which are usually distributed in social medias, are easily accepted by vulnerable groups

4. Migration

Socio-economic problems from COVID-19 may stimulate the internal and external migrations.

Draft Recommendations



Recommendations for formalization/legalization

1. Adoption of **urban planning documentation** for the selected settlements should be of priority for the local authorities, **to support the urban improvement/development of the settlements**
2. **Setting-up close communication with the citizens** in the light of meeting the needs of citizens related to their housing rights and urbanization
3. **Strengthening the capacities at municipality level** to facilitate the formalization procedures initiated by citizens pursuant to the Law on treatment of unlawful constructions
4. **Speed up procedures** for determination of the legal status of illegal constructed objects in the selected settlements, based on the requests submitted and in line with applicable laws and urban plans;
5. To find ways and means to assist citizens for legalization of the houses for families with **low incomes**, for whom the houses' s legalization is a priority;
6. In cooperation with central government to find ways and means for providing **favorable financial instruments** (loans, subventions) through which the population will be able to renovate their homes and provide decent homes to their families;
7. **Raise the funds for improvement of the infrastructure** conditions related to streets, water supply, electricity and sewerage network in the selected settlements

Draft Recommendations



Recommendations for the upcoming legalization process

1. Planning and organization of wide **public information/awareness campaign** in the selected settlements for the possibilities and procedures for legalization of illegally constructed object, and
2. To find ways and means to **include the NGO's** for assistance to citizens in terms of completing the documents for legalization procedure and preparing Requests for determination of legal status of their homes.

Recommendations for COVID-19 response

1. Continue with the awareness raising campaigns about COVID-19 health impacts and prevention measures, targeting especially the category who don't believe on the existence of the virus
2. Support families with children's in school with **free internet and IT equipment's**, in order students to follow the online learning
3. **Donor & charity coordination**, to escape support to those who are not in need and “over support” those who are in need (escape eventual wasting of the food, and other means)
4. Ensure distance during distribution of the support/donations
5. Following the developments in distribution of the vaccine, in cooperation with the health institutions inform the citizens about vaccination process and benefits

QUESTIONS?



Thank you for your attention.

We look forward to working with you!