

# MACEDONIA

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## Overview

The Republic of Macedonia is a land-locked country with limited material resources. Its vicinity to developed European countries leads to the awareness of a need of a higher standard level. The expected economic development to provide for a higher standard levels possible only through human resource development made as fast as possible, primarily through the educational system. The current Human Development Index (HDI) for the Republic of Macedonia (0,749) is much lower than the one of the developed countries and is also lower than the average for Eastern Europe countries (0,756).

Society stratification, linked with the change in the dominant ownership type has been leading to the increasingly rapid pauperization of certain vulnerable population groups. The quantitative analysis results show that poverty has been increasing and becoming increasingly deeper. The indicator of the poverty scope (the head count index i.e. the percent of the population living beyond the poverty line equal to 70% of the medium equivalent consumption) shows a constant increase, a tendency being present of its reaching the level higher than 30 in 2010.

It is within the areas where the poverty incidence has been the highest that the possibilities of providing solid educational infrastructure and equipment as well as high-quality teaching staff have been most limited. This imposes the need of centrally assisting the development of those areas and at a later phase of carefully engaging in the decentralization of the educational system.

Macedonia has an extremely high unemployment rate. Persons having completed secondary vocational education represent the population group most hit by unemployment. For example, in 1998, the unemployment rate of these persons amounted to about 40%. The reason for the low demand for those with the existing labour profiles in the labour market is that they have not been sufficiently adopted to contemporary conditions. In most vocational schools, instruction has not been sufficiently practice-oriented and knowledge and skills required to use contemporary technologies have not been given sufficient representation.

Moreover, the teaching equipment in primary and secondary schools is insufficient, obsolete and has not been unified. As a result, teaching is becoming increasingly verbal and experiments, demonstrations and practical work are present merely in certain schools where that results from personal initiative on the part of a teacher or the headmaster of the school.

In addition, in 2000, the first stage was completed to reforms to secondary vocational education within the VET PHARE program by which a number of occupations were covered. A new program will be implemented to cover a much greater number of occupations. Special attention must be paid to occupations likely to be useful to the eastern part of Macedonia, since there has been a great delay there in economic development and restructuring of the economy. Also, adult education now mostly provided through private educational institutions should be linked to the main educational system with the purpose of providing for better quality assurance. Bases should be provided for secondary vocational schools to be able to provide educational services to adults, mostly to embrace new contents in the field of education with the development of new technologies.

Furthermore, due to the apparent heterogeneity in marking criteria at secondary schools, post-secondary faculties are doubtful about the significance of the grades which applicants have received and conduct qualification exams by which preparedness is evaluated to follow particular courses of study, according to a scheme by which the success obtained throughout secondary education is evaluated as only 40% of the total score. In order to provide for better preparedness on the part of students in secondary schools education for a specific course of study, optional specialized subjects should be introduced. However, the comparability of applicants' preparation may be achieved by introducing a final national examination.

Finally, the permanent education of the teaching staff has been the concern of the Bureau for the Development of Education within the Ministry of Education and Science. This has mainly been done through various workshops and seminars. Continuing education units for teachers should be established, to be linked to faculties preparing the teaching staff, in order to provide for education upgrading in accordance with the recent programs of educational institutions. A special issue is the introduction of new teaching methodologies related to contemporary developments in science and technology, primarily of computer usage in the teaching of all subjects, not only from the aspects of training in the use of standard software use, but also as tools to enable the application of essentially new teaching methods.

The National Program of the republic of Macedonia 2005-2015 for education development anticipates the long-term needs of the state in the field of the education and implies readiness to guarantee that the vision, the ideas and the values contained in it will be realized. The strategic value of this document for every citizen and participant in the education is the possibility of realization of their aims and objectives.

The Program anticipates future changes in the local sphere, changes in the Ministry of Education and Science, changes in society, and changes in the international context, leading to relevant goals that need to be realized.

The Program is also focused on the organization and management of development. It is necessary in order to determine the dominant development trends in the closer and the wider environment, and their influence on the development and organization of the monitoring of outcomes. The performance and effectiveness of this organization are of key importance for the efforts taken for the accomplishment of the goals.

This Program has a mission to help in the efforts of Republic of Macedonia for its equal and respectable participation in the world, and before all in the European integrative processes, and to create conditions for prevention of negative consequences and the efficient use of advantages from educational, political, cultural and economical globalization.

Also, the Program aims to realize its mission with the help of an established long-term orientation and efficient interventions in the following strategic/key areas:

1. Education for everyone / provision of educational equality.
2. Promotion of intellectual growth and the learning.
3. Increase of the possibilities for participation.
4. Increase of the educational, cultural and economical competence of Macedonian society.
5. Strengthening and promotion of international cooperation.
6. Strengthening of the capacities of the Ministry of Education and Science.

## **The Structure of Schooling**

In the period 2001-2004, the Ministry of Education and Science has been in charge of the national policy in education and science. The Ministry prepares the regulations in education and science, which are verified by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, and is responsible for their implementation. It also organizes the financing of education and takes care of affairs in this area.

Within the Ministry, there is a Bureau for Development of Education with a status of a legal entity. Its authorities and competencies are in the area of preparation of the curricula and programmes of study, supervision and assistance to schools as well as the area of in-service training of teachers for the revised curriculum and innovation in the teaching process. Recently, the Bureau for Development of Education (through its Assessment Unit) has started organizing external exams for evaluation of achievements of pupils in the elementary and secondary schools. In this area, the Republic of Macedonia has taken part in several international surveys for evaluation of achievements in education. The State Inspectorate, as a body within the Ministry, performs inspections of the implementation of laws and other regulations in all levels of the educational system. The Pedagogical Service is in charge of supervision of the curricula and programmes of study, course books, textbooks etc.

With the new efforts for decentralization of the system of education, the key areas in educational policy have been determined. They are: the curricula and programmes of study, evaluation and assessment, providing quality and professional assistance, professional development of teachers, supervision (inspection), financing and maintenance of infrastructure. Also, the jurisdiction and the bodies of the educational institutions on national and local level have been determined. In that way, those employed in educational institutions, pupils, parents, representatives of the local community, the union, the social partners, interest group and other will be more included in the system of decision making in education.

*Pre-school education* (from the age of 6 months until school age): The management of the kindergartens is under the jurisdiction of their Governing Boards which consist of representatives of the founder, the staff, parents of the children and members from the local community where the kindergartens are located. Pre-school education is not compulsory, and the instruction is provided in the Macedonian language. For children of members of other communities, there are separate educational groups in the kindergartens and pre-school institutions where the instruction is performed in the mother language of the children: Albanian, Turkish, or Serbian. With legislative changes (Act for Social Protection of Children and Elementary Education Act), the children from kindergarten who are 6-7 years of age will be integrated into elementary education. The service of the pre-school institutions is adjusted towards the needs of the parents for care-taking and education of their children during the working hours of the day and the week. The programmes for pre-school education are detailed by members of the professional Councils and the teachers in the pre-school institutions.

*Elementary education* (from age 7 to 14 years): According to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and the Elementary Education Act, conditions are created for children from 7 to 14 years of age to attend elementary school from grade I to VIII. Children who will be of age 7 at the end of the calendar year are enrolled in grade I of elementary school. Due to the amendments to the Law, children who will be of age 6 by the beginning of the school year, can be enrolled in grade I only under the basis of a positive opinion issued by a specialist doctor, a psychologist and a pedagogical counselor. In the system of elementary education, the network of schools for instruction in mother language from grade I to grade VIII is being enlarged. For the pupils, members of the Macedonian ethnicity, the instruction is provided in Macedonian and the Cyrillic alphabet, and for the pupils from other communities the instruction is provided in their mother language: Albanian, Turkish, or Serbian. The pupils from the Vlach and Roma communities have a right to study through their mother language from the II till VIII grade in elementary schools on an optional basis. The pupils from the other communities study the Macedonian language as an official language of the Republic of Macedonia. The internal structure of the eight year compulsory education is adjusted to the age of the pupils into two developments period from

grade I to IV (homeroom teaching in core subjects) and from grade V to VIII (instruction in different subjects). The instruction in the class (educational group), during the first period including grade IV is as a rule provided by a single teacher. In the upper grades, from grade V to VIII, the classes of pupils are organized in the same manner, but if there is a need other classes can be formed. According to the national curriculum, the instruction from grade V to VIII is provided by subject-matter teachers, trained and certified for teaching one or two related subjects.

*Secondary education* (from age 15 until age 19): The public secondary schools provide instruction for young people from 14/15 years to 18/19 years of age. After completion of elementary school, pupils have a right to enroll in any secondary school. This right is utilized by about 85% of the pupils who complete compulsory education, and immediately enroll in a secondary school, in different programmes for general high school programme, vocational school (polytechnic), or secondary school for arts. The percentage of pupils who enroll in general high school programmes is about 40%, while the other 60% enroll in the technical and other vocational schools with three or four years of instruction. There is a small interest for enrollment in vocational training programmes, which last from six months up to two years.

Instruction in secondary education is provided in Macedonian and the Cyrillic alphabet, while for pupils from other communities instruction is provided in the language and alphabet of their communities, Albanian, Turkish, or Serbian, in a manner determined by law. The pupils from other communities also study the Macedonian language. According to the Secondary Education Act, instruction can also be provided in a foreign languages. Thus, this legal provision is applied by introducing bilingual instruction and opening of private schools using a foreign language for instruction.

The state schools are founded by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, while for private schools the government issues a “recommendation for verification” based upon the founder’s proposal for its curriculum and syllabus, based on an evaluation whether the pedagogical standards set by the Ministry of Education have been fulfilled. There is an ongoing procedure for changing the legal framework which will enable greater decentralization and taking over greater jurisdiction in secondary education on the part of the local government.

## **Legal Framework**

The new educational policy in the Republic of Macedonia has posed several important aims for establishing sound foundations for development. The established aims move education toward improving the efficiency; raising standards in compulsory, secondary and higher education; improving conditions for education of young people from 12 to 19 years; and creating conditions for education of adults. The process of democratization of the whole society and respect of human rights have created foundations for building democracy in education by respecting two basic principles:

principle of equality (justice, accessibility and respect of rights of all without difference in sex, age, racial, ethnic or religious background, place of residence and social status, capability and health condition);

principle of participation of subjects in education, (freedom of expression, choice and adequate participation in the decision-making in the educational practice, as well as acceptance of responsibilities).

The normative framework which determines the democratic and other basic principles of education consists of the following: The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, The System Act for Elementary, Secondary and Higher education, international documents, The Convention for the Children's

rights (UN, 1989), The World Declaration for Education for All (EFA, 1996), the Memorandum for Life-long Learning (2000) and other. The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and the system laws for education guarantee the pupils' right to education in their mother language.

Despite limited resources, the Republic of Macedonia has taken continuous care in the past decade enlarging and maintenance of the network of kindergartens and pre-school institutions, schools, faculties and universities for education in all levels, having managed with limited means of financing. There is a determination to strengthen the education of adults for completion of elementary education, for additional qualifications or further occupational education. This enables development of understanding, tolerance, cooperation and trust among children, young people and adults of different national and social backgrounds.

### **Freedom to Establish Non-state Schools**

According to the Secondary Education Act (September 1995), besides instruction in state (public) schools, there has been provision for secondary school instruction in private secondary schools.

### **School Choice Not Limited by Family Income**

According to the Act for Protection of Children's Rights (2000), the means for financing the kindergartens are provided from the state resources, the beneficiaries of the services, the local government, foundations, donations, legacies, sale of own products and other sources.

The costs for the education provision in public secondary schools are covered by the state, and in the private schools are covered by the parents of pupils. In the public schools, there is access for adults, who must however pay for the costs of their education.

### **Distinctive Character**

The responsibility of the states for the education of the population is getting bigger and bigger. A general trend in the world is that the duration of obligatory education, as the most developed form of responsibility of the state, increases continuously.

In the following period activities will be taken for the increase of the duration of the obligatory education in the Republic of Macedonia. For that purpose, the Ministry of Education and Science will introduce 9-year obligatory education. The increase will be realized by including the year before going to school in the system of the obligatory education. Structurally, it means that the pre-school group and the high group from the kindergartens will become obligatory for all of the children.

With the increase of obligatory education it is expected that:

the current 83,23% pre-school attendance will increase to 100%;

the educational structure of the population will improve;

the basic education will be strengthened;

the possibilities for occupational orientation will increase;

the passage to secondary education will be eased;

the school success rate will be increased; and,

educational capacities in rural areas will be used more efficiently.

What kind of 9-year obligatory education system will be implemented, that is, whether the model will be 3+3+3 or 5+4 or 4+5 or 6+3, depends on the available facilities and human resources and the character of the problems encountered. The manner of implementation of this model of obligatory education will be determined by additional decisions by the Ministry.

All of the analyses of the conditions of the education (especially pre-school, elementary and secondary education) have shown that one of the key problems in this sphere arises from excessive centralization. This has generated many problems such as

- the rigidity of the system;
- marginalization arising from regional or local particularities, especially in regard to the possibility of modernization of the curriculum;
- the existence of complex bureaucratic procedures in decision making;
- the inertness of the system to adapt according the dynamic of the changes, both in the educational sphere and also those arising from the social-economical development of the state and the region;
- procedures for the election of educational and managing personnel focused in one power center, the Ministry, which contributed to the domination of party, ethnic and personal interests in the conduct of elections (with marginalization of professionalism and quality as electoral criteria);
- the limited role of parents and local communities in the efficient functioning of schools;
- the limited possibilities for the creation and the conduct of school development plans as a result of complex bureaucratic procedures, with in consequence decreased possibilities for finding alternative financing sources;
- the centralization and the inconsistency arising from the lack of policies for the distribution of financial resources;
- disturbances in the process of connection of education and demand for labor as a result of the limited authority of educational institutions to make decisions about cooperation with the corresponding local and regional economic enterprises, as well as the inability of the latter to have an influence on the creation of curricula in local educational institutions;
- the centralized selection of school books results in creation of monopolies in their development, printing and distribution at the national level, which violates the pedagogical principle of the correlation with the particularities of the learner and the place where the process of learning occurs.

In the near future, measures will be taken to overcome the problems arising from the excessive centralization of education in Macedonia. With decentralization, a redistribution of responsibility for the

key educational issues will be achieved – improvement of the quality of the education, professional development of teachers, financing – on all of the three levels of the educational system, the central, the local, and the school. Responsibilities will increase on a local and school level at the expense of the concentration of responsibilities on a central level. These adaptations will contain:

reorganization of educational administration and management through new regulations for local autonomy and financing of this autonomy;

improvement of the management and organization of education, including strategy and conception capacities on a central level;

development of a more efficient system of financial planning, allocations and financial management (improved per-capita formula);

improvement of management on a local and school level, as well as of the professionalism and the efficiency of the employees in schools and local authorities;

precise definition and restructuring of the role and responsibilities of the administrative institutions on all three levels;

construction of a school autonomy system and providing training in school management for the directors of schools;

using the capacities of administrative institutions for monitoring and evaluation of the schools.

This realization of the decentralization will initiate a clear arrangement in which the state will retain responsibility for some decisions while others will be left to local authorities and to schools. For the efficient functioning of arrangement, besides the legal support of the decentralization process, it is necessary to establish indicators, mechanisms, and instruments for quality control, as criteria to determine the status of the educational institution and its benefits and responsibilities. The state administration will be responsible for the external control of the quality of the educational institutions, while the local subjects, above all schools and local authorities, will be responsible for providing conditions for higher quality education, according to the national quality standards for the education. The distribution of the power and the responsibility from state to local and regional level needs to focus on:

transferring responsibility for the foundation of elementary and high schools to the communities, which means that they will be the owners of the school property, will define the annual financial plans of the schools, will influence the election of school directors through their representatives on the school boards, will appoint the elected candidate, and in time will be responsible for the school network, meaning that they will have the right to open and close schools;

transferring responsibility for the maintenance of schools to the schools themselves and to local authorities;

transferring partial responsibility for financing of education to local budgets;

transferring responsibility for permanent monitoring and internal control of the quality of the educational process of the school to parent councils and local authorities;

creation of conditions and possibilities for private investment in education;

creation of conditions and possibilities for a higher participation in the creation of the local standards by all of the interested school and local subjects;

giving greater freedom to schools in the employment of all staff, with mandatory participation of the interested local subjects, the parents above all, in this process;

creation of possibilities for competition in the production, printing and distribution of school books and school equipment;

transferring of responsibility for the training of teaching and managing personnel to a wide market of educational services provided by accredited programs for training of teachers, directors and professional associates.

Local communities will conduct their control and responsibility based on a prepared “Handbook for the control of the communities in the educational sector in accordance with existing legislative regulations”.

In conditions of a decentralized education, the state has to take over the authorities and the responsibility for:

legislation;

partial financing, based on the distribution of the means for education from the central budget to local communities in the form of a block grant, using as principal criteria number of students, the condition of the infrastructure, the quality of the educational work established by the external control, and vertical student mobility;

external control of the operational quality of the educational institution;

assessment of performance of school operations and of pupils on the final exams;

creation of standards in education, i.e. indicators for effective educational institutions;

accreditation of programs for training of the educational, management and professional personnel;

licensing of the competence and other qualifications of teachers and school directors;

establishment of the state curriculum which must be obeyed by every educational institution;

public financing.

Implementation of processes for decentralization means not only a distribution of the power, but also distribution of responsibilities. It means that the decentralization will reflect changes also in the statute and the role of the local and regional political and administrative power centers. Taking over responsibility for education means also responsibility for its financing. This financing will represent one of the key problems which local autonomy has to solve in the following period. With a tendency for weakening of financial participation from the state, the largest burden in the development of the regions, and therefore of education, will fall on local budgets. To what extent local budgets will endure the pressure of the development of competition will depend from the quality of their development plans, the strengthening of the local economy, and their correctness in the implementation of tax politics.



Decentralization will have the consequence that responsibility for the labor force and the providers of services will devolve gradually from the central government to local and regional authorities. That will require taking over responsibilities, including for the consequences of the imbalance between the labor force and the local employment opportunities, and thus for the educational opportunities that will be at the disposal of youth and adults. In some cases, it can be expected that youth and adults will have serious problems with the possibilities for choice in the sphere of the education and the employment. Whether these problems will be greater or smaller depends primarily upon the power of the region and its capacity to satisfy the interests of the youth and the adults gravitating towards that region. That, on the other hand, might provoke an increase in differences among the regions of Macedonia, not only on plans for the supply of education and employment, but also on plans for the total economical and cultural development. In that sense, one of the priority objectives of the state in the following period will be the *creation of an efficient network of donors of educational, cultural and sport-recreational services*, as a precondition for the development of the regions and the successful decentralization of education. However, the development of the regions does not depend only on the strengthening of their institutional capacities, but also on the promotion and efficient use of the results of research and innovation, the quality of the cooperation between education and the economy, the use of information-communication technology, the available resources, and the quality of human resources.

The introduction and practice of information and communication technology have to be strengthened for a more efficient establishment of balance in regional development, without which it is unrealistic to expect the educational, research, cultural and entertainment institutions to function well and thus to expect satisfactory results in regional development. In the next years efforts should be made to promote the importance of information and communication technology not only for education, but also for the total development of the regions and of Macedonia as a whole. Since educational participation is in correlation with the development of the region, it is necessary that the cooperation between the economy and education, and the range, quality and usage of the information and the communication technology is revised and promoted.

The role of the educational institutions in the development of the regions has to be promoted in the next years. In that sense, it is necessary that educational institutions strengthen their activities for a greater and more efficient influence upon their nearer and wider social environment, becoming attentive to weaknesses and provoking changes. The objective is to establish an active cooperation of all regional actors in noticing and eliminating problems and hindering factors, detecting those which promote success, developing international cooperation, and unremittingly upgrading the attractiveness and the reputation of the region.

It is necessary to promote access to a wide circle of high quality providers of educational services in every part of the country, so that every individual will have the possibility of self-improvement and self-realization. Educational, sport, and youth institutions should be open and available for anyone. Also, it is important to strengthen the position of public libraries, centers for the education of children and youth, and the educational institutions for adults, that investments be made in the development of public cultural institutions, that initiatives for educational and cultural manifestations are supported, and that cooperation and connections are promoted.

The extent to which these objectives are realized depends on the consistency of local authorities in meeting their obligation to maintain and modernize the educational, sport, and cultural institutional networks, as well as the consistent fulfillment by the state of its responsibility for preparing and implementing the legislative and financing system. The correctness and the sustainability of the legislation are of exceptional importance, because it guarantees the principles of equality, while the efficiency of the local and the national economy determines the level of the public contribution. If these two conditions are realized, then conditions and possibilities will be created for an open approach to the

donors of public services and for an undisturbed managing and encouragement of students in making choices, completing their education, and acquiring qualifications.

A great challenge for the educational system, in the near future, will be the creation of a large market of donors of educational services for adults. The permanent satisfaction of the request arising from the sphere of labor and social life requires introducing legislation for adult education and support of initiatives for the realization of adult education programs.

### **Decisions About Admitting Pupils**

The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and the laws for education guarantee pupils the right to education in their mother language. The educational process in the public educational institutions is provided in Macedonian. For the members of the other communities, there are classes and schools with education provision in Albanian, Turkish, and Serbian. This right is guaranteed in the public pre-schools, elementary and secondary education. At the universities, education is provided in Macedonian, Albanian and various world languages, as regulated by law.

### **Accountability For School Quality**

Interventions in the sphere of the education will not be fruitful unless they are followed by a total and precise normative regulation. In that direction, the Ministry of Education and Science will act to promote a close connection of normative regulation with the Program for Education Development. The Ministry will establish professional institutions that will be in charge of the conduction of concrete activities based on objective outcomes and will serve for monitoring, quality control, and evaluation of the changes.

After the completion of the process for decentralization and in view of the efficient management of the changes in the sphere of the education, as well as to promote an increase of its quality, the Government will take measures for the establishment of the following national institutions:

**The State Educational Inspectorate (DPI)** will represent a central educational institution responsible for regulations in the sphere of the education and systematic quality control of the educational process. It will undertake an institutional evaluation of the educational institutions, but also separate evaluation of the teaching and management personnel with respect to quality and competitiveness.

**The State Examination Center (DIC)** will conduct a periodic check of the knowledge of the students through the organization of final exams after the fourth and the eighth grades and through the state examination and the final vocational exam in secondary vocation education.

**Pedagogical Bureau of RM (current Bureau of Education Development (BRO))** will take over authority for the development and promotion of the education nationally. The following activities in pre-school, elementary, and secondary education will be under its authority:

development of educational plans and programs;

building and maintaining of knowledge standards and the norms and standards for an effective school;

determination of the concepts for school books and the methodology for their evaluation;

participation in the evaluation of the appropriateness of school books and school equipment in relation to the teaching program;

preparation of the program for the professional development of the teachers;

building programs for extra-curricular and educational activities for youth in schools;

strengthening of the pedagogical and psychological services in schools, with a clear distinction of the responsibilities of staff and their focusing on development;

providing assistance to schools in maintaining quality corresponding to national quality standards;

support of projects having as an objective the improvement of the quality in education in accordance with the state priorities;

establishment of a system for training of teaching personnel;

cooperation with the non-governmental sector;

research and development in education.

### **Teaching of Values**

The educational system is built upon the cultural values, traditions and aims towards which the Republic of Macedonia is striving, such as the respect of the basic values and human rights of citizens, recognized by the international law and determined by the Constitution.

Within the programmes of study for lower and upper grades of elementary education, special attention is addressed to introducing the topics for civil education and rights of children, as well as innovation in methods which encourage the processes of socialization, cooperation, education for tolerance and building mutual trust among children in the life and work. These activities are supported by the Center for Civil Education from Callabasas (California USA) and the Association of Catholic Relief Services for Macedonia.

In the upper grades of elementary education, there is a project for Civic Education, which includes home-room teachers and their pupils. It includes project activities for acquisition of knowledge, skills and development of capabilities such as identification of problems related to the life of children in the school and local community and finding ways and methods for problem solving in everyday life.

In grades VII and VIII of elementary school, a subject called Culture for Citizenship has been introduced, with an aim to equip pupils with knowledge, develop their skills, abilities and help them to adopt values which are prerequisites for development of a whole person as well as competent, responsible and active citizenship.

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