



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

INFORMATION ON RETURN AND REINTEGRATION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA



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I. INTRODUCTION

As one of its programs, IOM Bern is implementing the Swiss Return Information Fund (RIF) project. This project aims at providing the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and the Return Counsellors in the Cantons and in the asylum registration and procedure centres with current and clear information helping them in preparing and supporting voluntary returns and reintegration.

In the framework of RIF, IOM Bern also develops Country Information Sheets (CIS) that contain an overview of various topics relevant to return and reintegration in the countries of origin. The CIS has the purpose of facilitating the preparation of voluntary returns by clarifying frequent questions and basic information on relevant countries of origin in the Swiss context. Return counsellors are therefore better informed and can consult the CIS for guidance if needed.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a landlocked country, which borders with Kosovo to the northwest, Serbia to the north, Bulgaria to the east, Greece to the south, and Albania to the west. It is one of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia, from which it declared independence in 1991. The latest statistics from 2016 show that the country's population was approximately 2.07 million. The capital, Skopje, is by far the largest urban center with over 600,000 inhabitants. According to the last census data, the largest ethnic group in the country are the ethnic Macedonians. The second largest ethnic group are the Albanians who inhabit much of the north-western part of the country. Following them, the Turks are the third largest ethnic group of the country followed by Romani, Serbs, Bosniaks, Aromanians, and other ethnic groups. Eastern Orthodox Christianity is the majority's religion in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (65% of the population, the vast majority of whom belong to the Macedonian Orthodox Church). Various other Christian denominations account for 0.4% of the population. Muslims constitute 33.3% of the population, with the majority of them belonging to the Islamic Religious Community of Macedonia. The official and most widely spoken language is Macedonian, which belongs to the Eastern branch of the South Slavic language group. In municipalities where ethnic groups are represented with over 20% of the total population, the language of that ethnic group is also official. The official currency in the country is the Macedonian denar (MKD). The denar is circulated in notes of 10, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1,000 and 2,000, and coins of 1, 2, 5, 10 and 50.

A. TO DO BEFORE THE RETURN

- ✓ Make sure that he/she possesses a valid travel document necessary for the return to the country
- ✓ Should the returnee not possess a valid passport or other travel document, he/she needs to contact the Macedonian Embassy/Consulate in the host country for the issuance of a Laissez Passer (Патен лист)
- ✓ The returnee should establish contact with family members to inform them about the return

- ✓ Make sure that all necessary arrangements regarding permanent or temporary accommodation upon return are established
- ✓ Acquire all the necessary information concerning arrival details and onward transportation to final destination in the country of origin
- ✓ Make sure that he/she collects all relevant documents from authorities in the host country (including, diplomas, birth certificates, residence/work permits, medical reports, etc.)
- ✓ Inform relevant organizations in host country about the need for assistance regarding the return and upon arrival
- ✓ Inform the Diplomatic/Consular Office of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the host country about the return

B. TO DO IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE RETURN

- ✓ Upon arrival the passport is stamped by the border authority indicating the date of entry in the country. The validity of the passport or other travel document of the returnee has to be minimum 3 (three) months (not applicable with the Laissez Passer).
- ✓ If the returnee does not possess a valid ID document (ID card), he/she needs to apply in person for issuance of a new ID card, immediately upon return. The telephone number for scheduling the meeting is: 080019292. The number can only be reached via landline and cannot be reached through cell phone.
- ✓ Apply for health insurance
- ✓ Register at the Employment Agency as an active job-seeker and request information about the programmes offered by the Agency for a possibility of receiving additional education/ training/ job referral
- ✓ If applicable, apply for social welfare support
- ✓ Returnees that have been abroad longer than 3 months are obliged to register their return within a period of 3 days at the closest police station to their residence, in order to exercise their rights. If a citizen has minor children, s/he is also obliged to register their return.

II. HEALTHCARE

A. HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Primary ambulatory care is provided mainly by private primary care providers and by outpatient specialist-consultative providers in the 34 health centers and some private providers.

I. Primary Health Care

The first contact of the patient with the health care system is through the primary care provider who acts as the “chosen physician”. With the reform of primary care between 2005 and 2007, general practitioners of medicine and dentistry, paediatricians and gynaecologists have been privatized. Primary care providers organize their work in single or group practices. Each primary care physician is obliged by law to be associated with a medical nurse to form a medical team. With the reform of primary care, all primary care providers that want to deliver services under government health insurance are obliged to contract with the Health Insurance Fund (HIF). Each primary care provider has a number of registered patients who pay a certain capitation. The capitation consists of a 70% fixed amount and a 30% variable amount that is defined through the achievement of preventive health targets that include rational prescribing and referrals, preventive check-ups and counselling and education workshops for children in schools. The participation in the preventive services is evaluated on an annual basis. Patients have the right to choose their physician, except for patients under 14 years of age for whom parents bear this right and obligation. As free choice is a right, patients can change their physician without having to explain the reasons. The law limits the number of changes of primary care physician to two per year.

In terms of geographic distribution, primary care is easily accessible near the place of residence to almost all citizens in the country due to financial incentives to encourage doctors to open practices and provide services to populations living in rural and remote regions.

The latest reform related to the improvement of the efficiency of the health care system was the introduction of the electronic system for referrals and prescribing, MyAppointment. Since July 2013, primary care providers can refer their patients to higher levels of care based on the availability of appointments, which are displayed in the electronic database of all health care providers in all specialties throughout the country. MyAppointment is a relatively new tool being further developed to become integrated within the health information system. By avoiding the overlap of patient scheduling, it has reduced previously overcrowded waiting rooms and decreased patient waiting times for some services.

2. Specialist-consultative outpatient care

Alongside the wide network of primary care providers, the system was designed to provide specialist services on an outpatient basis with wider outreach, which were especially useful in smaller towns where secondary level inpatient care was not available. The ambulatory specialist services purchased by the HIF are provided mainly through health care providers in the public domain, i.e. within the 34 health centres (87% of the budget for specialist-consultative services), while a small portion of this budget (13%) is spent on services delivered by approximately 450 private outpatient specialist-consultative providers. The specialist-consultative services provided within the 34 public health centres cover specialties such as ophthalmology, internal medicine, otorhinolaryngology, dermatology and mental care. These specialists provide diagnostics, treatment and follow-up services to patients referred by their chosen primary physician.

3. Inpatient care

According to the Law on Health Care of 2012, hospitals can be general (with at least internal medicine, general surgery, gynaecology and obstetrics, and paediatric wards), specialized or clinical. At the moment, there were 73 health care facilities providing inpatient care, divided into four major categories: 14 general and four clinical hospitals at secondary level, 28 tertiary level university teaching clinics and institutes, 20 specialized hospitals and rehabilitation centres providing longer-term treatment and specialized care (tuberculosis treatment, psychiatric care) and seven nonhospital units providing maternity services. Of these 73 inpatient facilities, 65 fall under the category of a hospital.

Most hospitals and inpatient care facilities are publicly owned. Only six hospitals are in private ownership: one general and one clinical hospital in Skopje and four specialized hospitals, three of them in Skopje. The public specialized hospitals provide specialized care in rehabilitation, psychiatry, gynaecology and obstetrics, whereas private specialized hospitals provide care mainly in cardiac surgery, ophthalmology, gynaecology and obstetrics.

At the tertiary level, services are provided by university clinics and institutes in the capital of Skopje. These 28 university clinics have been the first pillar of tertiary care in the country since their establishment in the late 1940s. Initially established as the University Clinical Centre in 2007 by government ordinance, the clinics have been transformed into separate legal entities while cooperation between them is regulated by an inter-clinic referral system. In 2014, a new University clinic for cardiac surgery was opened.

With regards to the overall health services provided through the HIF in publicly-owned hospitals, approximately 40% of the costs are related to acute health services, 10% to chronic illnesses, 30% to ambulatory services and 20% to other services. In 2012, the highest concentration of acute patients was registered in the region of the city of Skopje (approximately 46% of all DRG cases in the country, including patients in private hospitals that have contracts with HIF). The hospitals with the highest number of cases are the University clinics and regional clinical hospitals in Tetovo, Bitola and Shtip.

4. Rehabilitation/intermediate care

Rehabilitation care is provided for post hospitalization and postsurgical recovery, as well as for physiotherapeutic needs of diverse population groups, including the elderly, children and persons with disabilities. Rehabilitation care services are provided by several specialized health care institutions in the public domain: the centre for rehabilitation from cardiovascular diseases in Ohrid, centre for physiotherapy and rehabilitation in Skopje, centre for rehabilitation in Katlanovo, as well as several healing spring spas with medical treatments, covered by the HIF that are subject to referral and in some cases, require previous approval by the HIF.

Medical rehabilitation services covered by the HIF include physiotherapy (massage, electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, phototherapy and ultrasound), support by professional, and orthodontic aids, for the prevention or mitigation of reduced working or functional capabilities of a person. Medical rehabili-

tation is performed as ambulatory care, although patients can receive specialized medical rehabilitation in inpatient care, under the condition of prolonged (over 10 days) hospitalization for treatment of an acute condition. The medical rehabilitation covered by the HIF is obtained by a recommendation from a specialist and a referral from the primary care provider. To provide equality of access and fair resource distribution, the specialized medical rehabilitation can be provided for a maximum of 21 days; exemption is made for children with cerebral palsy that can use these services up to 30 days four times a year until the age of 14, and twice per year thereafter. Since September 2014, some categories of patients are eligible for direct admission to rehabilitation services without previous hospitalization: patients with multiple sclerosis, malignancies in children, cerebral palsy and patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

5. Mental health care

Care for persons with mental health conditions is mainly provided in public psychiatric wards, although care from private providers is also available. The public system is represented through the Specialized Psychiatric Hospital and the University Clinic of Psychiatry, which are both located in the capital Skopje and provide inpatient and day-care services. Moreover, there are several day centres for mental health care, prevention and treatment of depression located within the Health Centres. The strategic determination in social protection is for deinstitutionalization, towards community-oriented service delivery in line with the EU strategy and the recently adopted WHO European Mental Health Action Plan.

In 2006, the Law on Mental Health was enacted, regulating the rights and responsibilities of both health care providers and persons with mental health conditions. Due to the importance of mental health in the community, the law also provides legal grounds for establishing a Committee for Mental Health in each unit of local self-government, enabling close monitoring of the implementation and protection of the rights of the persons with mental conditions.

Each inpatient health care setting is legally required to have a Patients' Rights councillor within the health care facility. This councillor, appointed by the Ministry of Health, has the obligations to consult patients on their rights, to receive their complaints and to address them within the health care setting or to advise on further possibilities for resolving any issues. The councillor reports back to the Ministry of Health on complaints received and actions taken.

B. CONDITIONS FOR THE COVERAGE OF MEDICAL TREATMENT

At the national level, there are two routes for the patients to access health care services. The first is prescribed and predefined for services covered under the Health Insurance Fund (HIF), whereas the alternative route is obtaining and paying full costs out-of-pocket for health services in the market. Through the pathway of HIF coverage, general physicians are the first contact of patients with the health care system. Access to these services is free of charge at the point of delivery. The GPs act as gatekeepers for access to more specialized health care. After examination in primary care, if there is need for further outpatient specialized services, the GP refers the patient to higher levels of care,

specifying the type of service and the health care institution at which services should be obtained. If further examinations are needed, depending on the case, specialists can further refer the patient to other services. Provision of tertiary care is conditional on previous examinations at the secondary level at general or other specialized hospitals. The role of the GP is also central in the therapy management for the patient. With a few exceptions for some specialist-prescribed medicines, the GP issues prescriptions for the therapy prescribed by the specialist and provides continuous therapy refills for the patient's chronic conditions. Exceptions are made for patients with chronic diseases and children, who can be sent from GP to university clinics directly; as can patients with emergency conditions or in life-threatening situations.

Equity of access to the health system remains however a challenge that needs continuous attention. In particular at primary care level, there are strong regional disparities. At secondary level, facilities are largely available throughout the country, both as outpatient specialist services provided through Health Centres – and as inpatient care provided through the clinical and general hospitals. Due to the small population size, tertiary care is only available at the university clinics and institutes in the capital Skopje. Nevertheless, there are on average eight hospital beds per 1000 people in four regions but only 2.2 beds per 1000 in Skopje. Equally, the move by many specialists from the public to the private sector due to better remuneration creates unequal access to health services, leaving the most socially deprived population groups with limited choice and within crowded public health facilities.

Inequalities in health status exist between the general population and marginalized groups, in particular the Roma population. Main sociodemographic and health indicators show a 10 years shorter life expectancy for Roma compared to the general population. Also in terms of child mortality, the ethnic minorities of Albanian, Turkish and Roma population had considerably higher death rates for infants and under-5s compared with Macedonians and Serbs.

C. MEDICAMENTS AVAILABILITY

A detailed list of available medication, as well as related costs is available at: <https://lekovi.zdravstvo.gov.mk/>.

III. SOCIAL SECURITY AND INTEGRATION

In general, there are no regions where return or reintegration is an issue. However, some regions provide better climate for the returnees to reintegrate than others. About 20 percent of the total population in the country lives under the official poverty line. Poverty significantly affects the rural areas of the country. Despite this, poverty is estimated to be in continuous decline since 2009. According to the most recent data from the State Statistical Office, only 9.0% of all employed persons

were poor, 41.1% of all unemployed, 7.1% of all pensioners, and 29.4% of other inactive persons were poor.

Embedded in the Macedonian Constitution is the right to social security and social insurance, in accordance with the principle of social justice. Social protection is thus defined as a system of measures, activities and policies for preventing and overcoming basic social risks to which citizens are exposed in their lives, for reducing poverty and social exclusion, and for strengthening capacity of vulnerable citizens for their own protection. The beneficiaries of social protection are the citizens of the country who have permanent residence and foreigners who possess license for permanent residence in the country. Also, the state guarantees the right of assistance to the disabled and unable to work, and provides special protection for disabled persons and their inclusion in social life.

The social protection system in the Former Yugoslav Republic Macedonia is regulated by two key laws: Law on Social Protection and Law on Contributions for Mandatory Social Insurance.

Article 2 of the Law on Social Protection recognizes the following social risks:

- Health risks (illness, injury, disability),
- Old age and aging,
- Single parent family,
- Risks of unemployment, loss of income for subsistence based on work,
- Risks of poverty,
- Risks of another form of social exclusion.

The Law on Contributions for Mandatory Social Insurance regulates the obligations to pay contributions to social security of citizens. Mandatory social protection contributions include:

- Pension and Disability Insurance;
- Mandatory fully funded pension insurance;
- Health Insurance;
- Ensuring from unemployment.

Macedonian citizens, including returnees, are eligible for institutional and non-institutional social protection. The most important benefit from the institutional social protection are included rights to financial assistance. Article 44, of the Law on Social Protection provides the following rights to financial assistance:

- Social financial assistance
- Permanent assistance (right to permanent financial assistance for disabled person, materially insecure and who can't provide the means for its existence)

- Financial assistance of a child that is under 18 and has the status of a child without parental care, and has no income and assets which can be served up to 26 years of age,
- Financial assistance of a mother who gave birth to a fourth child, caring for children until they reached 18 years of age, who is unemployed and is not entitled to a pension until reaching 62 years,
- Cash compensation for assistance and care of another person: persons who are 26 years of age with moderate, severe and profound mental disabilities, persons with severe impediments, totally blind person and a person with permanent changes in health status, which needs help and care from another person because can't meet basic needs, might be eligible,
- One-time financial assistance and assistance in kind shall be granted to a person or family who find themselves in situations of social risk, as well as individuals and families who are at risk due to a natural disaster or epidemic and longer treatment in a health institution,
- Salary compensation for shortened working hours due to care for a child with physical or mental disabilities,
- Financial assistance for social housing to persons who are socially vulnerable and homeless,
- The right to health care

The basic financial assistance amounts to 35 EUR, and increases with each additional family member. The average monthly amounts of social welfare benefits amount to: 49.79 EUR for financial assistance, 35.21 EUR for social assistance, 55.72 EUR allowance for assistance and care, 107 EUR financial compensation of salary for reduced working hours for care of a disabled child, 58.31 EUR salary compensation for reduced working hours for care of a disabled child, 58.35 EUR financial assistance to a person under 18 that has the status of a child without parental care.

The main institutions where Macedonian citizens can initiate the procedure to protect and/or exercise their social rights are the Centers for Social Work which are disbursed throughout the country (in most major municipalities), which decide on the rights related to social security, detects and determines social issues and problems, provides social assistance for vulnerable cases (including VOTs), etc.

IV. HOUSING

A. HOUSING SITUATION

In the country, most of the urban life and population is centered in Skopje, with more than 50% of the urban population either living or working in the city. According to the census in 2002, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has a quite high percentage of urban dwellers, amounting to 54%. At the same time homelessness and the emergence of people with unsolved housing issues represent one of the most difficult challenges to overcome, with a part of the population looking to solve their housing problem by illegally constructing dwellings on state-owned land in the suburban areas

of towns. The data from the State Statistical Office shows that while 12.9% of households had problems with bad living conditions (leaking roofs, damp walls, broken windows and rot in window frames, etc) in 2015, this percentage rose to 13.5% in 2016. Most of the illegally built constructions are located around Chair municipality, Karposh, Gjorche Petrov, Ohrid, Prilep, and Aerodrom.

On the other hand, there are no significant challenges in finding accommodation in the country. The availability of accommodation is highest in the capital, Skopje and in other larger towns. The price for accommodation varies in accordance with the location and the size of the accommodation unit.

B. REQUIREMENTS TO BUY/RENT REAL ESTATE

The main precondition for renting of accommodation in the country is a rental contract which is concluded between the landlord and the tenant. The rental contract must be in written form, signed by both parties, and certified by a notary. This obliges the landlord to pay a 10% income tax of the rented amount, and because of this, landlords usually are reluctant to follow the legal procedure. The costs for maintenance, such as bills for electricity, water, heating, as well as small repairs, are covered by the tenant. Usually, landlords prefer the rental agreement to be concluded on an average of six months, and no less than three months.

The cost of the rent varies significantly, mainly depending on the location and duration of the rental period. Thus, the rent of an apartment in central Skopje is 350 - 400 EUR per month for 60m². The rent in the outskirts of the city is less or the same compared to the center. In Vodno or Crnice bigger apartments (90-125m²) are rented for 1000-1400 EUR per month. Outside of Skopje the rent is significantly lower.

Most commercial banks, but also private entities offer credits for purchase, renovation, or upgrading of accommodation units, with the average annual interest rate ranging from 7,5 – 9,5% when the credits are in EUR, and around 13-15% when the credits are in MKD. This is largely dependent on the amount of the credit, the number of years of payment (at least 5, at most 30 years), as well as if the credit is secured by mortgage, or deposit. For obtaining the credit, the applicant must provide proof of employment and 1/3 of the salary should be equal to, or higher than the monthly instalment.

For returnees interested in constructing a house, the main precondition is that the land is privately owned and that the returnee acquires a building license. The costs for construction of 1m² vary depending on the location of the dwelling, the quality of the materials, and the communal taxes, with the minimum costs range from 400-500 EUR in the urban areas.

The land is divided into two categories namely agricultural land and land for construction. The agricultural land can be privately owned or state-owned, and the procedure for obtaining land property is the same as for obtaining real estate. Both parties need to conclude a written purchase contract, prepared by a lawyer, signed by both parties, certified, signed and stamped by a public notary.

The price of land for construction purposes varies depending on location. For example, in the city centre of Skopje and its immediate surroundings the price of land ranges from 500 – 1000 EUR per

m2. In the more luxurious settlements such as Vodno, Przino and Crnice, the prices may reach 800 – 1000 EUR per m2. In the suburbs and weekend locations of Skopje the prices range from 80 - 100 EUR per m2.

C. WAYS TO FIND ACCOMODATION

1. Regular Ways

There is a large number of real-estate agencies in the country which cover the whole territory of the country or operate in a certain town. Various information regarding opportunities of buying real estate can be found online <http://www.pazar3.mk/> ; www.reklama5.mk ; www.imoti247.com ; www.metar2.mk . Detailed information as well as contacts for most famous real-estate agencies are included in the contact list.

2. Social Services or Emergency Shelter

Socially vulnerable groups can benefit from various policy measures, such as emergency shelter, financial support for social housing, social apartments and other support. Thus, socially vulnerable groups without place to stay are temporarily accommodated in a Reception Centre for a period of up to 60 days. The Reception Centre offers accommodation, food, proper hygienic and sanitary conditions, as well as free counselling and other social protection services. After the initial short-term accommodation period and after all necessary personal documents are procured, returnees will be able to realize all their rights identically as the rest of the citizens of the country, including the right to social housing.

The Article 83 of the Law on Social Support envisages financial support for social housing to the socially vulnerable population without accommodation. The socially vulnerable persons are:

- Beneficiaries of permanent social support - persons not able to work, materially unsecured, who cannot secure means for their existence on the basis of other regulations. Persons not able to work are those with mental development disabilities who were not able to acquire education and those with physical disabilities unable to work; persons who due to their health situation are not able to work; single women during the pregnancy period-one month before the delivery; self-sustained parent in line with the Law on Family up to 3 years of age of the child; persons older than 65 years of age.
- Person that up to 18 years of age who had a status of a child without parents and without parental care can be a beneficiary of financial support for social housing up to 26 years of age.

Returnees in socially vulnerable situation, especially those at risk of homelessness can apply for a social apartment. The beneficiaries of social apartment's project include: persons that up to 18 years of age had a status of children without parents and without parental care; beneficiaries of social or permanent financial support; persons affected by natural disasters; disabled persons and persons that depend on the other persons care; socially vulnerable categories of the Roma population (according to the Roma Strategy) and self-sustained parents with minor children. The decision for grant-

ing a social apartment is made by the municipal council (in the municipality where the social dwelling is located), and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

D. EXAMPLES OF RENTAL FEES

There are substantial differences in the pricing of accommodation units, by region, and by area, with most of the accommodation offers centered in and around Skopje. The prices for apartment units are on continuous rise, with the average price being increased almost by 50% in the last 10 years. This is most apparent in Skopje and in Ohrid, as the two most attractive locations for purchasing an apartment. The approximate prices for buying an apartment are as follows:

- Center of Skopje: 1100-1300 EUR/m² for used apartments; 1300-1600EUR/m² for new and renovated apartments
- Aerodrom and Lisice: 1000-1200 EUR/m²
- Karpos 1 & 2: 1100-1200 EUR/m²
- Karpos 3 & 4: 900-1100 EUR/m²
- Kozle: 1100-1300 EUR/m²
- Topansko Pole, Cair and Sever, Vlae and Gjorce Petrov: 800-950 EUR/m²
- Kisela Voda: 800-950 EUR/m² for used apartments; 1000-1150 EUR/m² for new and apartments in building process
- Ohrid: Center: 900-1200 EUR/m²
- Kraj Ezero (By the lake): 1500 EUR/m²
- Daljan: 600 EUR/m²
- Bitola: 600-800 EUR/m²
- Tetovo and Gostivar: 600-800 EUR/m²

V. EDUCATION

A. EDUCATION SYSTEM

The education system of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia consists of pre-school, primary (6-14 years), secondary (14/15-17/18 years) and higher education.

Primary education lasts nine years and is mandatory and free for all students (aged 6-14 years). There are approximately 1,100 primary schools in the country (including regional offices), and most are easily accessed. The level of literacy is high and accounts for 98.8% for men and 96.8% for women. The gross coverage rate is 63%, and the net rate is 91%. The rate of dropout is greatest when it

comes to Roma children. Free of charge books for the primary school pupils, as well as free of charge transportation for the pupils who live farther than 2km from the school are granted. There are no restrictions in the access to primary education for returnees.

According to the Law on Secondary Education, since 2007 secondary education, is also compulsory and free of charge, and is divided into four types: general secondary school, art education, education for children with special needs, and four-year, three-year and two-year vocational education. Gymnasium and art education last four years. Part of the education system is also vocational training. At the end of the three-year vocational education, students take a final exam which does not give them the right to enrol in a university. Students who complete the four-year vocational education can choose between the final exam and state exam, depending on whether they want to continue their education or not, while for students from general high schools, the state exam is obligatory. Among the existing 116 high schools, more than 100 are public and others are private or religious. Approximately 14% of secondary schools are gymnasiums, 34.5% are vocational, while 29% offer gymnasium and vocational education; 4 schools are for children with special educational needs and 5 are art schools.

Higher education is realized at three levels: undergraduate, master and doctoral studies. There are 5 state universities functioning in the country (one in Albanian) and more than 6 private universities and additional faculties.

The education system is organized around four languages of instruction in primary schools (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian / Bosniak) and three languages of instruction in secondary schools (Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish). About 29% of primary schools and 34% of secondary schools are bilingual / trilingual. The bulk of them are schools with Macedonian and Albanian language of instruction.

The Law on Adult Education was adopted in 2008, followed by adoption of several sub-legal acts (or amendments) that regulate the procedures for verification of adult education programs (non-formal education), premises, equipment and staff standards for institutions for adult education. In 2011, another legal act related to this area was adopted. According to the laws, the adult education council is responsible for strategic issues related to the development of adult education. The Center for Adult Education, which was established in November 2008 and which is in operation since June 2009, is the primary institutions related to adult education in the country.

At the moment, 53 providers of informal training are currently verified (accredited) and they are allowed to issue certificates recognized in the state. They are verified for enabling adult training programs, and since 2012 around 40 participants have become professional trainers. Adults are offered a wide range of learning programs, ranging from vocational skills, to computer proficiency.

B. ACCESS AND REGISTRATION PROCEDURES FOR RETURNEES

The enrolment in primary education takes place in May and the school year begins in September. The following enrolment documents should be submitted to the primary school:

- Birth Certificate
- Vaccination certificate

Children with foreign citizenship or without citizenship residing in the country are entitled to primary education under the same conditions as the Macedonian children, and they are offered additional support for learning the Macedonian language, and/or other subjects.

The candidates that completed elementary education abroad can enrol in the secondary education upon the recognition of the elementary education diploma. Enrolment documents for secondary education:

- Application form (available at the secondary school)
- Original primary education certificates for V to IX grade
- Birth Certificate

The private secondary schools are based on the principle of self-financing. The average fees for one school year are from EUR 2000 to EUR 5000.

For the enrolment in university education, only students who have passed the state exam are eligible to apply. The University has the autonomy to define the procedures for selection of students interested to enrol in the first year of university education. The costs for participation in the costs for studying at the public universities vary depending if the student enters the state quota (part of the participation is covered by the state budget) which depends on the average success of the student in high school, or if the fees are covered by the students themselves. According to the most recent changes in the Law on University Education, students who have entered the state quota have to pay 200 EUR per year, while for dispersed studies the participation is EUR 100 per year, and students who are not in the state quota need to pay 400 EUR per year. The documents required to enrol in the university education are as follows:

- Application form (available at the university)
- Diploma for passed state exam
- Birth certificate
- Citizenship
- Confirmation for payment of administrative fees

The studies at the private universities are based on the principle of self-financing. The approximate fees for one academic year are 2000 EUR.

C. RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN DIPLOMAS

Macedonian citizens who have completed education abroad can request to have their diplomas recognized and accredited in the country. The institutions responsible for the recognition and accreditation of foreign diplomas are the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education and Science. During the recognition procedure, the following factors are considered: education system of the country that issued the diploma; duration of the education; the educational plan and programme; the rights acquired by the diploma holder in the country that issued the diploma; and other factors which are considered as important during the recognition procedure.

The procedure for application is identical for the primary and secondary education. In addition to the request for recognition, the applicant must submit the original diploma issued by the accredited foreign primary school and translation of the diploma in three samples. The translation must be provided by an authorized translator. Additional documents may be required by the relevant ministries.

For the recognition of the university diploma, in addition to the necessary documents, the applicant should also submit a signed statement by the relevant institution in the host country, that the documents are valid in line with the legal regulations of the country that issued the diploma. The Information Centre verifies the validity of the original documents and examines the background of the institution that issued the diploma. The recognition is done by an Expert Commission established by the Educational Council of the relevant university. If during the recognition procedure is assessed that the educational plan and programme are significantly different from the educational plan and programme of the relevant university, the applicant will have to pass additional exams.

VI. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

A. ECONOMIC SITUATION

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has a primarily service-oriented economy, despite the fact that Macedonian economy has been traditionally based on agriculture. In 2017, 16.36% of the employees in the country were active in the agricultural sector, 29.81 % in industry and 53.83% in the service sector. The private sector mainly consists of SMEs, accounting for 99.28% in total number of active enterprises.

Regarding unemployment in the country, the unemployment rate fell to 22.8% in the first half of 2017, which is a historic low. Most significantly, youth unemployment and long-term unemployment remain high, at 46 and 81%, respectively. Youth unemployment decreases with the increase in the level of education but remains almost twice as high as the average. Forty percent of young people find jobs 1 to 3 years after they leave the education system, and the average transition time from education to work among young people is 6 years. There are substantial differences in the unem-

ployment rates by region. Despite slower growth, there were improvements in the labor market. Employment grew by 2.4% in 2017, helped in part by employment subsidies in the first part of the year, through which almost 60% of the new jobs were created.

Employment and labor relations are regulated with the Law on Labor Relations, Collective Agreements and other legal acts, which regulate all forms of employment, relations between employees and employers, termination of employment, retirement, etc. In addition to the Law on Labor Relations, severance and unemployment insurance are also covered by the Law on Employment and Insurance in Cases of Unemployment. Most of the regulations related to labor relations are in line with international labor standards and apply equally to both domestic and foreign persons.

According to the Law on Labor Relations termination of employment can occur in the following cases:

- An agreement between the employer and employee;
- Upon the expiry of a fixed-term of employment;
- When enforced by law;
- By notice, supplied either by an employer or employee;
- Business-related reasons (e.g. restructuring).

B. REQUIREMENTS TO ACCESS THE LABOUR MARKET

The general preconditions for employment include: Employment contract, which can be concluded only by a person who is minimum 15 years of age and in good health, as well as other specific criteria stipulated by the employer which must be fulfilled. The employment contract, which must be in writing and kept on the work premises, should address the following provisions: description of the employee's duties, duration of the contract (finite or indefinite), effective and termination dates, location of the work place, hours of work, rest and vacation periods, qualifications and training, and salary and pay schedule. The penalties for employers which infringe the rights of the employees can be up to 8.000 EUR.

C. GENERAL INFORMATION ON MOST AVAILABLE JOBS AND SALARY LEVELS

The Law on Labor Relations among other things establishes a 40-hour workweek with a minimum 24-hour rest period, paid vacation of 20 to 26 workdays, and sick leave benefits. Employees may not legally work more than an average of eight hours of overtime per week over a three-month period or 190 hours per year. According to the collective agreement for the private sector between employers and unions, employees in the private sector have a right to overtime pay at 135 percent of their regular rate. In addition, the law entitles employees who work more than 150 hours of overtime per year to a bonus of one month's salary.

Collective agreements on the other hand define the minimum salary for each profession. Salaries are computed and paid once a month. Social contributions and personal income taxes are withheld by the employer at the time of payment of net salaries to employees.

According to the State Statistical Office, the average net wage for May 2018 has been estimated at 24.509 MKD, or approximately 398 EUR. The Personal Income Tax rate is 10%.

The Employment Agency deals with all questions related to labour exchange, as well as the rights and duties of the employers and unemployed persons, in accordance with the Law on employment and insurance in case of unemployment. Additionally, in the past few years many private employment agencies have been established, and mainly respectable foreign and domestic companies are using their services. The most popular online private employment agencies are:

- Vrabotuvanje.com (covers four segments, namely employment, employment exchange, employment leasing and employment education with a database of more than 29.000 unemployed persons).
- Najdirabota.com.mk (all vacancies from the daily newspapers are available for free on this site).
- Dekra.com.mk (branch of Dekra Arbeit GmbH from Stuttgart, Germany offers consulting in the area of human resources, temporary employment, matching etc.).

D. UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE STATE

The Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia (EARM) provides the following services for unemployed persons:

- Registering the unemployed person in the registry (data base) of unemployed persons in Macedonia. Documentation needed: ID card, Employment record book, Diploma on education obtained; Attestation on the citizenship; Attestation on the financial situation of the family; there aren't special requirements needed to be fulfilled by the returnees in order to utilize the benefits.
- Obligation for regular visit/info by the unemployed person - on every 30 days for the persons who are beneficiaries of financial reimbursement and right to a health protection; on every 60 days for the persons who are beneficiaries of health protection and on every 6 months for the persons who are not beneficiaries of financial reimbursement or health protection, and are not active job seekers. An unemployed person who is not fulfilling the obligations and requirements will be removed from the registry (database) and he/she could only apply again after 1 year.
- Right to health protection (the unemployed person has a right to health protection while he/she receives financial reimbursement and if he/she does not have any other insurance base). The documentation needed varies depending of the financial, family and educational conditions.

- Right to a severance payment. An unemployed person who was employed for a minimum of 9 months continuously, or 12 months with discontinuity within the last 18 months, before ending the labour relation/employment, has a right to financial reimbursement:

o a) The financial reimbursement is paid to the unemployed person for the period of 1 month if the person has labour history record at least 9 months continuously or 12 months with discontinuance in the last 18 months. The period increases progressively depending of the time of the employment insurance. In addition, the unemployed person with 57 years of age for a woman and 59 years of age for man and over 15 years of employment insurance receives a financial reimbursement until the new employment i.e. until fulfilling one of the bases for termination of the right to a financial reimbursement.

o b) The extent of the financial reimbursement is determined on the basis of the calculated and paid salaries by the employer, for the last 24 months in accordance with the law and collective agreements: 50% of the average salary of the worker for persons who have a right to a financial reimbursement up to 12 months, and 40% of the average salary of worker for person who has a right to a financial reimbursement longer than 12 months. The financial reimbursement cannot be more than 80% of the average salary per worker in the country published for the previous month.

o c) The request for financial reimbursement is submitted to the Employment Agency Centre in the place of residence of the unemployed person. It is submitted within 30 days from the day of the termination of the labour relation.

o d) The unemployed persons whose labour relation ceased because of: giving written statement on termination of the labour relation (except if that statement is given due to the changing of the place of living of the marital partner or marriage); termination of the labour relation with settlement; the person enjoys rights based on the labour relation against the law; termination of the labour relation by force of law (not in case of bankruptcy); dismissal by the employer because of infringement of working discipline; refusing to work on the job on which he/she is put in compliance with law; refusing to be overtaken by another employer with settlement; refusing training and additional education and qualification improvement; fulfilling retirement conditions, are not entitled to receive financial reimbursement.

Particular attention was given on designing and implementation of measures and activities for promotion of youth employment, by introducing special measures for this vulnerable group on the labour market, implementation of tax incentives for employment of young people, measures for reducing their informal employment, info meetings etc. In August 2015, an Action plan for employment of young people 2016-2020 was adopted, which defines specific activities and results for the next five-year period, the realization of which will improve matching supply and demand of skills on the labour market, promotion of (formal) jobs creation in the private sector, facilitation of school to work transition etc. Also, a new format of an Individual Employment Plan will be initially implemented for active job seekers registered for the first time (inflow). After the unemployed persons are reg-

istered in the Registry of unemployed persons, they are directed to their first interview with an official from EARM. On the first interview, the EARM Official collects all personal information about the individual and by using the Employability Checklist, classifies it in one of the three profiles (conducts profiling of the unemployed person) as directly employable, moderate obstacles, significant obstacles.

E. PENSION SYSTEM AND ACCESS FOR RETURNEES

The main structure of the national pension system in the country consists of: a statutory pension scheme (first pillar); a statutory funded pension scheme (second pillar); and a supplementary pension scheme (third pillar).

- Statutory pension scheme: mandatory insurance, based on generational solidarity – pay as you go (PAYG), providing earnings-related benefits based on the length of working service - defined benefit (first pillar);
- Statutory funded pension scheme: mandatory, fully funded pension insurance scheme, run by private pension companies supervised by the state, providing benefits linked to accrued pension capital - defined contribution (second pillar); and
- Supplementary pension scheme: voluntary, fully funded pension insurance, including both personal schemes (for people between 15 and 70 years of age) and occupational-based schemes (third pillar).

The first pillar provides a part of the old-age pension, disability and survivors' pension benefits, and the minimum pension benefit. The second pillar pays out part of the old-age pension. The benefits paid from the supplementary pension scheme are similar to those from the second pillar, with the only difference that voluntary pension scheme members can decide to withdraw accumulated assets from third-pillar individual accounts as a lump sum, which is not allowed in the mandatory system.

The statutory pension scheme (first pillar) is mandatory for all economically active people, including all employees, self-employed persons and farmers. The statutory funded pension scheme (second pillar) is mandatory for those who started work from 1 January 2013 onwards.

Since 2014, some of the amendments related to pension policy have included: a change in the pensionable age though voluntary prolongation of retirement by up to three years (maximum 65 for women and 67 for men); exemptions from paying pension contributions (compulsory social insurance contributions) for people who are participating in concrete public employment programmes; and the replacement of consumer price index (CPI) indexation with flat-rate increases.

Contribution rates: the pension contribution rate from gross wages was reduced from 21.2% in 2008 to 18% in 2010 and has since remained at that level. Due to deficits in the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund (PDIF), further planned reductions (to 17.6%) are ceased.

Pension System: Access for Returnees

Eligibility and requirements:

To qualify for right of age pension according the Macedonian legislation, it is necessary to have reached a certain age and to contribute a certain number of years:

- man (64 years age and 15 years working life residence)
- woman (62 years age and 15 years working life residence)

Old age pension benefit is determined from the pension base in percentage determined according to the length of pension service.

Registration procedure:

The procedure for exercise of the right to pension and disability insurance is initiated:

- at the request of the beneficiary for exercise of the right to old age pension
- at the request of a family member of the deceased beneficiary or pension beneficiary for exercise of the right to family pension
- at the request of the beneficiary or on a proposal from a medical doctor treating the beneficiary, or by a medical commission for exercise of the right to disability pension (disability pension, injury-based financial benefit)

Registration documents:

Application for exercise of the right to pension and disability insurance is submitted by filling in EP-10 Form (application form for exercise of the right to pension and disability insurance), to a regional unit of the Professional Service of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund where the beneficiary was last insured.

Additional documents for old-age pension:

- work record booklet and evidence of the pension length of service that is not registered therein (decisions, certificates, confirmations and etc.)
- birth certificate with personal identification number or insight in ID card
- decision on termination of employment, or termination of insurance (M2 Form).

VII. BUSINESS SET-UP OPPORTUNITIES

A. THE BANKING SYSTEM

The financial system in the country consists of the National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia (NBRM), commercial banks, financial companies, savings houses, exchange offices, the Deposit In-

insurance Fund, insurance companies, pension funds, investment funds, brokerage firms, and a stock exchange. The banking system itself is two-tiered, based on the Banking Law and the National Bank Law. NBRM is the independent money-issuing institution responsible for price stability, stability of the national currency (denar – MKD), stability of the financial system, general liquidity of payments within the country and abroad, and the conduct of monetary policy and foreign exchange policy. The Supervision Department at NBRM serves as the main regulatory body responsible for the supervision of all banking institutions and savings houses.

The banking system in the country currently consists of 18 private banks, 9 savings houses and the State-owned Macedonian Bank for Development Promotion. According to the Banking Law, banks observe the principles of profit maximization, liquidity, safety, and profitability. A foreign bank could have a presence either as a legal entity or by opening a branch or a representative office. The three largest banks - Komercijalna Banka, Stopanska Banka Skopje (National Bank of Greece is the main shareholder) and NLB Tutunska Banka (NLB Group is the main shareholder) dominate in the banking system, holding together more than 60% of the total market activities. Behind these three large banks, the market is still highly fragmented, but it has undergone a significant transformation over the past two years and a majority of the local banks having been acquired by foreign investors.

The current Company Law is effective since 2004. This is the primary law regulating business activity in Macedonia. It defines the types of companies, procedures and regulations for their establishment and operations. The amendment to the Company Law in 2005 facilitated the start of the Central Register at the beginning of 2006, as the body authorized to perform all company registrations and the institution to maintain the Trade Register of all companies.

As all foreign investors are granted the same rights and privileges as Macedonian nationals, they are entitled to establish and operate all types of self-owned private companies or joint-stock companies. Foreign investors are not required to obtain special permission from state-authorized institutions, other than what is customarily required by law. Under the Company Law, companies are formed as separate legal entities that operate independently and are distinct from their founders, shareholders and managers. Depending on the type, companies have their own rights, liabilities, names and registered offices. The law defines five forms of companies: General Partnership, Limited Partnership, Limited Liability Company, Joint Stock Company and Limited Partnership by Shares.

The country has introduced a ONE-STOP-SHOP SYSTEM that enables investors to register their businesses after 4 hours of submitting an application (in practice, it might take 1-2 business days). One can register a company in Macedonia by visiting one office, obtaining the information from a single place, and addressing one employee. This significantly reduces administrative barriers and start-up costs.

Following registration, the company must perform the following:

- Activate the Bank Account;
- Registration with the Public Revenue Office to obtain a VAT number; and

- In case of foreign investment, registration of the foreign investment within the Central Registry.

Required data to open a company:

- Name of the company
- Main activity/core business (for example: Trade with....)
- Headquarter of the company in Macedonia
- E-mail address (thru email address the company will send tax returns to Public Revenue Office and Central Register, National bank of Macedonia and all other institutions)
- Name of the bank in which the company will have bank account
- Owners, Physical person: Name, surname, address of living, copy of passport and ID card, Legal entity: Current Status of the company issued by Trade register at their native country (Act of establishing on the company of the owner) not older than 3 months
- Authorized representative – manager: name, surname, address of living, Copy of the passport and ID card
- Initial capital (minimum 5.000 euro).

For more information visit www.crm.com.mk.

B. POSSIBILITIES OF TRANSACTIONS (CASH AND GOODS) FROM ABROAD

External payments, i.e. payments from abroad are regulated by the Law on Foreign Exchange Operations, and for some transactions there are still restrictions, so the banks are required to make control prior to the payment. The non-banking entities make the payments through banks as credit transfers on formalized payment orders, prescribed with the Instructions on payment operations with abroad. Given that banks use the SWIFT network for transfer of funds through their accounts in foreign and domestic commercial banks, these payment orders must contain the elements, standards and the identification IBAN codes necessary for execution of international payments, as well as personal details of the recipient of the inflow from abroad. The fees and commissions of the domestic bank regarding inflows from abroad realized with mediation of a domestic bank shall be charged by the Bank from beneficiary.

Regarding the transactions of goods, they are subject to customs supervision and procedure, as provided by customs and postal regulations. Goods sent from abroad by an individual in small consignments by letter or parcel which is intended for a natural person, resident of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or holder of a permit-to-stay in the country are relieved from import duties and VAT if their total value does not exceed 45 EUROS, equivalent amount in Denars. The relief does not apply for consignments containing alcohol, perfumes and eau de toilettes, tobacco and tobacco products. Goods sent from abroad by a legal entity (company) in small consignments by letter or parcel which is intended for a natural person (or company), resident of the Republic of Macedonia or holder of a permit-to-stay in Macedonia are relieved from import duties and VAT if their total value

does not exceed 22 EUROS, equivalent amount in Denars, with included transport and manipulative costs. Goods, whose value exceeds 45 EUROS shall be subject to both import duties and VAT.

There are also no legal limitations on private financial transfers, foreign exchange transactions, and capital movements.

For more information please see: www.customs.gov.mk

C. POSSIBILITIES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO START A BUSINESS

The Macedonian Bank for Development Promotion (MBDP) is the only development bank in the Republic of Macedonia founded with a special Law on Establishing the Macedonian Bank for Development Promotion in 1998. MBDP is a development and export bank which strategic goal is to provide support and to incite development of the Macedonian economy through providing finance to small and medium-sized enterprises and export-oriented companies. The activities of the MBDP include:

- financing the development of the Macedonian economy
- financing of infrastructure
- providing support to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Republic of Macedonia
- instigating exports
- instigating environment protection
- providing export credit insurance of Macedonian products and services against commercial and political risks
- supporting the regional development

The services that the MBDP offers are the following:

1. LENDING

- export credit financing - working capital for pre-shipment export finance and working capital for bridging the period between export and collection of payment from the foreign buyer;
- credit support to SMEs - permanent working capital and investment financing from various fund sources: ICL-Revolving, MBDP, EIB, EIB-Revolving;
- credit support to agriculture and agroindustry - primary production, processing and export - through commercial banks or directly through MBDP;
- micro financing - micro and small scale enterprises, individual entrepreneurs, handicraft shops, private merchants, market counters, and other micro and small scale entities;
- financing energy projects - energy efficiency and renewable energy sources;
- loans for reducing unemployment - creation and preservation of jobs and self-employment financing;
- loans for accommodation facilities - micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, with registered office in the Republic of Macedonia, for purchasing, building and adaptation of small accommodation facilities not exceeding 70 beds and having up to 3 stars standard.

- loans for old people's homes and kindergartens - micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, with registered office in the RM for building and equipment of facilities for old people and kindergartens.
- loans for municipalities in the country - for realization of projects from the instrument for pre-accession assistance-IPA component for cross-border cooperation.

General Terms and Conditions for use of the loans:

Micro loans:

- loan amount up to EUR 15,000
- entities having up to 20 employees
- repayment period not exceeding 24 months

Small loans:

- loan amount up to 50,000 EUR
- small enterprises having up to 100 employees
- repayment period not exceeding 48 months

2. CREDIT INSURANCE of:

- domestic accounts receivable (pre- and post-shipment)
- export accounts receivable (pre- and post-shipment)
- against commercial and political risk.

3. FACTORING – enables sale of goods and supply of services with defer payment, while part of the invoice value is received in advance.

For more information please visit: www.mbdp.com.mk

In addition, credit from commercial banks is available to private companies, but it is still subject to significant collateral in the form of real estate, which often is appraised by the banks at lower than the market value. Overall customer service still does not meet Western standards.

As of 2018, there are 17 deposit-taking institutions in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 15 banks and two savings houses. Six banks are mainly oriented to lending to non-financial companies, five banks are mostly crediting households (and real-estate), three banks equally finance the two sectors, while one bank, Macedonian Bank for Development Promotion places credits through the other banks (as the state-owned financial intermediary for approved credit lines from international financial institutions).

D. BUSINESS SECTORS WITH HIGH SUCCESS RATE

- ICT Sector
- Agriculture

- Animal Husbandry
- Service Industry (including transportation services, such as taxi)
- Construction

VIII. TRANSPORTATION

The transportation system of the country consists of the following modes of transport:

- Road transport
- Railway transport
- Air transport
- Inland waterway transport (mostly used for transfer of goods)
- Urban transport

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has two international airports, namely the “International Airport Skopje” and a smaller airport “St. Paul the Apostle” in Ohrid. Both are opened for international travel. The “International Airport Skopje” is the main airport in the country which operates with more than 10 foreign airlines, and more than 20 destinations worldwide, from and to the country. The airport is located approximately 17 km southeast from Skopje.

There is organized transport from the airport to Skopje, in the form of a bus shuttle, organized by company Vardar Express, and the costs for the transport range from 3 to 5 EUR depending on the departure location within Skopje. In addition, there are numerous registered taxi transporters available at the airport. The costs for the taxi transportation to Skopje would cost approximately 1200 MKD (20 EUR).

The airport “St Paul the Apostle” in Ohrid is a small, primarily tourist airport. At this airport regular traffic is conducted by approximately 4-5 foreign airlines, flying to and from 7-8 destinations, and these are most often used during the summer period. The airport is located 10 km from Ohrid.

Aside from air transportation, returns to the country can take place by bus, or by railway. A number of bus lines connect Macedonia with all neighbouring countries and other European cities. Buses are frequent and offer relatively inexpensive fares and professional services. The international bus station is located in the centre of the city Skopje, together with the Central Railway station. The most important railway line is the line on the border with Serbia – Kumanovo – Skopje – Veles – Gevgelija – border with Greece. A railway line connecting Skopje to Sofia, Bulgaria is under construction. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has sixteen official land border crossing points. All the border crossing points are opened 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 12 months a year.

Internally, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is well situated as a transport hub. The overall road network of the country totals 13,278 km of roads, with continuous investment in roads in accordance with the National Road Transport Strategy, prepared by the Ministry of Transport and Communications with assistance from the EU. Most of the roads connecting the larger cities are of

good quality, especially the transit routes that are mostly motorways. The most important of these is the E-75 motorway, which follows the Morava and Vardar valleys and leads on to the Aegean and the Near East. There are also good roads connecting the country with Bulgaria to the east and Albania to the west. The road network in the country continues to be modernized in order to satisfy transportation needs. Road transport remains the key mode for intercity passenger travel. Passenger travel modes include: national, international, urban-suburban, taxi, railway and air transport.

The country's public bus service improves year by year, and there is a useful network of local buses at a flat fare per ride. Within Skopje, there is a wide range of public bus lines which cover the entire city. All passengers must own an electronic card (Skopska) which can be purchased for 150 MKD (2.5 EUR), with the price for each individual travel being 35 MKD (0.50 EUR). More information about sales points for the Skopska card and bus card credit, travel itinerary, bus lines, services, etc. can be acquired at www.jsp.com.mk.

Long-distance inter-regional routes serve all major destinations from the capital with hourly departures and are an economic way to travel. The central international and intercity bus station is located in the center of the city Skopje, and there are several private travel companies which offer their transportation services from the capital to almost all the towns in the country, but also between different towns within the country. The complete travel schedule and price list can be acquired at: www.sas.com.mk

Pricelist for return tickets:

- Skopje – Veles: 180 MKD (3 EUR)
- Skopje – Kumanovo: 200 MKD (3,5 EUR)
- Skopje – Bitola: 630 MKD (10 EUR)
- Skopje – Ohrid: 680 MKD (11 EUR)
- Skopje – Tetovo: 200 MKD (3,5 EUR)
- Skopje – Gostivar: 400 MKD (7 EUR)
- Skopje – Strumica: 730 MKD (12 EUR)

Pricelist for return tickets to international destinations:

- Skopje – Belgrade: 2.290 MKD (37 EUR)
- Skopje – Sofia: 1.850 MKD (30 EUR)
- Skopje – Munich: 9.310 MKD (151 EUR)
- Skopje – Istanbul: 3.810 MKD (62 EUR)
- Skopje – Vienna: 6.240 MKD (101 EUR)
- Skopje – Bern: 9.590 MKD (156 EUR)
- Skopje – Zurich: 10.750 MKD (175 EUR)
- Skopje – Ljubljana: 5.540 MKD (90 EUR)

The Railway infrastructure in the country has been put in place since 1873, when the first Railway Track from Skopje to Thessaloniki in Greece has been constructed. The railways network is about

900 km in single track lines and normal gauge. The railway network system is connected north-south with the railway network systems of Serbia and Greece. The total length of the railway infrastructure in Corridor 8 (east-west) is about 306 km on the territory of the country and 154 km (or 50%) are constructed and operational. Therefore, about 89 km or 29% of the total length are remaining to be constructed on the link with Bulgaria. About 63 km or 21% of the total length on the link with Albania remain to be constructed. The railway transport is managed by the public owned “Macedonian Railways” and at present, the company is the only provider of railway services in the country. Inter-city rail travel is economical and generally comfortable, although the network is somewhat limited due to the mountainous nature of the country. The fastest lines run between Skopje - Bitola and Skopje - Gevgelija, with local trains much slower. All information regarding railway transportation services, including ticketing, travel plans, etc. are available at: www.mzt.mk.

Pricelist for return tickets:

- Skopje – Kumanovo: 140 MKD (2,5 EUR)
- Skopje – Veles: 180 MKD (3 EUR)
- Skopje – Gostivar: 252 MKD (4 EUR)
- Skopje – Gevgelija: 444 MKD (7 EUR)
- Skopje – Bitola: 502 MKD (8.5 EUR)
- Skopje – Prilep: 398 MKD (6.5 EUR)

Taxi transportation is also available for local travel, and remains the most popular means of travel, especially in smaller towns. It is advisable to avoid drivers soliciting passengers around bus stations and train stations and to take licensed cabs from marked points, or to book them using official phone numbers, which are easily identifiable via a five-digit phone number beginning with 15. The taxi fare in Skopje costs 40 MKD (approximately 1.5 EUR) start, and 25 MKD (approximately 1 EUR) for each additional kilometre. The taxi fares in smaller towns are slightly lower.

Due to the Macedonian advanced roadway, getting around by rental car is also available and relatively straightforward. Car firms including local branches of international companies can be found at the airport and in tourist areas, with charges similar to those in the US and UK. A valid ID document and driver’s license are mandatory. Seat belts are mandatory and cell phone usage is illegal.

IX. TELECOMMUNICATION

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has a modern digital telecommunications network. The Macedonian telecommunications sector is among the most liberalized in the region. The telephone system is modern and digitalized. The major provider of fixed-line communications is Makedonski Telekom (www.telekom.mk). Other fixed-line operators include one.Vip (www.vip.mk), Neotel (www.neotel.mk) and Telekabel (www.telekabel.com.mk). The digitalized telephone service is available in most rural areas and direct international dialling is available everywhere. Three mobile tele-

phone operators currently provide services in Macedonia: T-Mobile, one.Vip and Lycamobile (www.lycamobile.mk - virtual mobile operator). The country calling code is +389.

The country also pursues international trends in the development of its Internet communications and enables easy and fast Internet access made via numerous Internet providers. The largest internet provider in Macedonia is Makedonski Telekom, offering wireless, dial-up, ISDN, ADSL and optic internet connections. This is a vibrant market populated by numerous internet service providers (ISPs), whose rates and service quality vary widely. The country has various firms licensed to operate data-transfer services, among which one.Vip and Telekabel are the largest.

In addition to fixed and mobile telephones and internet, the telecommunication system in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia also includes radio and television. The public radio broadcaster operates over multiple stations and languages, 3 privately owned radio stations broadcast nationally and there are about 70 local commercial radio stations. Regarding television, the public TV broadcaster operates 3 national channels (in several languages) and a satellite network. There are also 5 privately owned TV channels which broadcast nationally using terrestrial transmitters and about 15 which broadcast nationally via satellite. There are roughly 75 local commercial TV stations and several privately-owned cable operators offering domestic and international programming.

X. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

All citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are required to possess personal identification documents. The authority for issuing personal and travel documents is the Ministry of Interior.

There are established general procedures for obtaining personal and travel documents such as personal identification card and passport. There are no particular procedures for returnees, and the same procedures are applied as for Macedonian residents. The procedure for issuing travel documents to Macedonian citizens is regulated in article 3 of the Law on Travel Documents which determines the types of travel documents such as: passport, common passport, diplomatic passport, official passport and emergency travel document ('paten list') as well as travel documents that are issued on the grounds of international agreements. Passports, common passports and emergency travel documents for returning in the country may be issued upon citizen's request and have to be personally submitted except for the issuance of travel documents for minors/persons without legal capacity where the parent or the legal guardian submits the request for issuance of a travel document. For the issuance of a travel document the person is obliged to present an identification document, which can be either a personal ID Card, or in cases when the person does not have residence in the country he/she has to present another identification document issued by a diplomatic/consular office of the country, or a document issued by authorities of a foreign country, confirming the person's identity. In cases of loss of the passport, the person must report immediately, or within 3 days at the latest, to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Diplomatic-consular offices may issue travel documents abroad for the Macedonian citizens.

In cases of loss of the passport abroad the holder of the passport is obliged to immediately report that to the nearest diplomatic-consular office of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia competent for issuance of an emergency travel document which permits returning to the country upon the request of the passport holder. Together with the request for issuance of an emergency travel document, the holder of the passport has to submit two photos with dimensions of 35X45, in black and white or in color. Emergency travel documents may be issued for a maximum of 30 days or for the time period necessary for returning to the country.

Macedonian citizens that have been abroad longer than three months are obliged to register their return within a period of three days in the closest police station to their residence, in order to exercise their rights. If a citizen has minor children s/he is also obliged to register their return. The competent authority for registration of temporary residence, permanent residence and temporary residence abroad is the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Before leaving the country temporarily (from three months to a year), citizens are obliged to report to the competent authority in the place of residence or on the border office or in the diplomatic-consular office in the country in which the citizen is planning to have temporary residence. Macedonian citizens, who have resided abroad and would like to register residence in the country, do not need to cancel their residency permit abroad.

In cases where a person who is 14 years old is returning to Macedonia without a parent, or a legal guardian, or is travelling with a third person, a written consent for the travel is required from the parents, or the legal guardian, and authorized by the relevant diplomatic/consular office of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia abroad.

For the issuance of personal ID card, for initiating procedure for obtaining citizenship, travel document, birth certificate, or for the registration or cancellation of residence, the person has to schedule a meeting for the submission of necessary documents with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The telephone number for scheduling the meeting is: 080019292. It is important to note that this number can only be reached via landline, and cannot be reached through cell phone. The person then can choose where the meeting will take place, in accordance with the last registered residency address.

For the issuing of a personal ID card the person previously must have registered residence in the Macedonia. For issuing of the first personal identity card a request, which can be found free of charge in the local office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, has to be fulfilled and submitted. In addition, the person must submit a birth certificate, a citizenship certificate, and a personal identity card of one of the parents, as supporting documents. Upon the submission of the request, a record of the finger print will be taken by the authorities, as well as a digital photo of the person requesting the ID card, and a payment of 190 MKD (approximately 3 EUR) needs to be paid. Personal ID card may be issued to any person who has turned 15 years. A person who has turned 18 years must have a per-

sonal identification card. If the person changes residence, the personal ID card must be changed, as well.

For registration of residency, the citizen must submit a request for registering residence in the local office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs competent on the territory in which the citizen is registering residence. In addition, the person must submit an identification document and documentation that the accommodation unit is in that person's ownership, or a rental agreement prepared by a lawyer and authorized by a notary, and signed by both the person who submits the request and the owner of the accommodation unit.

The price of the documents is as follows:

Personal ID Card: 190 MKD (approximately 3 EUR).

Birth Certificate: 100 MKD in administrative tax stamps and 50 MKD (approximately 2,5 EUR).

The initiation of the procedure for obtaining citizenship: 20 EUR (1,230 MKD).

The issuing of the citizenship certificate: 80 EUR (4,854.00 MKD).

The issuing of a regular passport: 1750 MKD, of which 250 MKD is in administrative tax stamps for persons over the age of 27 and 100 MKD for persons aged 4-27, and 1500 MKD paid on a budgetary bank account.

The issuing of an emergency passport within 48 hours: 4750 MKD, of which 250 MKD in administrative tax stamps and 4500 MKD paid on a budgetary bank account.

When a Macedonian citizen returns to Macedonia he/she has to undergo a regular entry procedure that starts with the passport control where the border police checks the travel document of the passenger, after which the returnee proceeds to the customs office which checks the goods that the returnee may carry. The passport is stamped by the border authority indicating the date of entry in the country. The same procedure is applied to foreigners as well. The validity of the passport or other travel document of the returnee has to be a minimum 3 (three) months (not applicable with the Патен Лист).

Security measures have increased at the border crossing points following global developments. Upon arrival in the country, the returnee has to proceed to the passport desk, managed by the border police, submit the travel documents and inform the officer of the purpose of the visit, or the reasons why they went abroad, where they stayed, and what did they do.

If the authorities doubt the validity of the travel documents, have suspicions about former actions either in the country of origin, or abroad, and/or if the returnee carries goods which exceed the restrictions outlined by law, the returnees may need to undergo an interrogation by the authorities. The same procedure can be applied both when the means of transport is by air, and by land. In cases of land travel, the customs control can check the trunks of the vehicles, and the luggage carried by the returnee.

All foreigners entering the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are required to “register” with the police station closest to their address of stay within 72 hours upon their arrival in the country. The same applies for persons whose parents possess Macedonian citizenship, but they themselves do not. For those staying in hotels this is done automatically by the hotel administration.

There are no restrictions, or any other forms of proceedings and state involvement upon the return of Macedonian citizens who have been granted or requested any form of asylum, or international protection (refugee status, temporary protection, or subsidiary protection). Additionally, there are no known cases of former rejected asylum seekers that have had problems upon their return, neither of political, nor of a social nature. The authorities treat them the same way as any other Macedonian citizens that return from abroad. Similarly, there are no known cases of returnees being subjected to legal proceedings because of illegal exit from Macedonia.

XI. LIST OF CONTACTS

A. HEALTH CARE

I. Health care centres

Name of the hospital	Address	Contact
Ministry of Health	50-ta Divizija, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 311 2500 Email: contact@zdravstvo.gov.mk Internet: www.zdravstvo.gov.mk
Health Insurance Fund of Macedonia	Leningradska 98, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3118 566 Email: zoranj@fzo.org.mk Internet: www.fzo.org.mk
General Hospital/Clinical Center Majka Tereza	Vodnjanska 18, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3147 147
Acibadem Sistina	Skupi 5A, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3099 500 Email: callcenter@acibademsistina.mk Internet: www.acibademsistina.mk
City General Hospital 8-mi Septemvri	Pariska bb, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3087 400 Email: office@bolnica.org.mk
Re-Medika	16-ta Makedonska Brigada 18, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 2603 100 Email: contact@remedika.com.mk Internet: www.remedika.com.mk
Neuromedica	Jordan Mijalkov 62, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 311 40 23 Email: neuromedica@neuromedica.com.mk Internet: www.neuromedica.com.mk
General Hospital Kumanovo	11-ti Oktomvri bb, 1300 Kumanovo	Tel.: 00389 31 425 460 Email: opstabilnica_ku@yahoo.com
General Hospital Tetovo	29 Noemvri 16, 1200 Tetovo	Tel.: 00389 44 330 002 Email: bolnicate@t-home.mk

2. Organizations providing medical assistance

Name of the organization	Address	Contact
HERA	Franklin Ruzvelt 51a/26, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3290 395 Email: hera@hera.org.mk Internet: www.hera.org.mk
Red Cross	11 Oktomvri 42a, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3139 578 Email: skopje@redcross.org.mk Internet: www.Skopje-redcross.org.mk
HOPS	Hristo Smirnenski 48/1-6, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3246 205 Email: hops@hops.org.mk Internet: www.hops.org.mk

B. HOUSING

1. Real estate agencies or other means to access the house market

Name of the agency	Address	Contact
Agency for Real Estate Cadastre	Trifun Hadji Janev # 4 1000 Skopje	Tel.: (02) 3204 800 Email: office@katastar.gov.mk Internet: www.katastar.gov.mk
Elegant	Jane Sandanski 67, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 2455 758 Email: info@elegant.com.mk Internet: www.elegant.com.mk
Domadom	Mitropolit Teodosij Gologanov 72B lok. 18, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3051 300 Email: info@domadom.mk Internet: www.domadom.mk
Pazar3.mk		Tel.: 00389 47 454 072 Email: support@pazar3.mk Internet: www.pazar3.mk

2. Social/public services available for helping returnees in finding a place to live

Name of the Service	Address	Contact
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy	Dame Gruev 14, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3 106 212 Email: mtsp@mtsp.gov.mk Internet: www.mtsp.gov.mk
Center for Social Work	Nikola Vapcarov 11, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3297 700 Email: jumcsrskopje@mtsp.gov.mk Internet: www.jumcsrskopje.gov.mk

Name of the Service	Address	Contact
Institute for Social Affairs	11 Oktomvri 42a, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3230 401 Email: juzsd-sk@mtsp.gov.mk Internet: www.zsd.gov.mk

C. EDUCATION

I. Schools and other institutions related to education/training

Name of the Institution	Address	Contact
Ministry of Education	Sv. Kiril I Metodij 54, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3117 896 Email: contact@mon.gov.mk Internet: www.mon.gov.mk
University Sv. Kiril I Metodij	Goce Delcev 9, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3293 293 Email: ukim@ukim.edu.mk Internet: www.ukim.edu.mk
State University of Tetovo	Ilindenska bb, 1200 Tetovo	Tel.: 00389 44 356 500 Email: international@unite.edu.mk Internet: www.unite.edu.mk
University Goce Delcev Stip	Krste Petkov Misirkov 10A, 2000 Stip	Tel.: 00389 32 550 002 Email: rektor@ugd.edu.mk Internet: www.ugd.edu.mk
Nikola Karev High School	Nikola Rusinski bb, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3072 773 Email: info@nikolakarev.edu.mk Internet: www.nikolakarev.edu.mk
Goce Delcev High School	Pero Chicho 31A, 1300 Kumanovo	Tel.: 00389 31 421 079 Email: gdku10@yahoo.com Internet: www.gdku.edu.mk
NOVA International Schools	Prashka 27 1000 Skopje	Tel : 00389 2 3061 807 Internet : www.nova.edu.mk

2. Organizations providing assistance in the educational sector

Name of the Organization	Address	Contact
Open Civic University for Lifelong Learning Koco Racin	Mirce Acev 4, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 31 63 413 Email: ruracin1@t-home.mk Internet: www.univerzitetkocoracin.edu.mk

D. EMPLOYMENT

I. Employment centres

Name of the Center	Address	Contact
Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia (ESARM)	Vasil Gjorgov 43, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3111 856 Email: info@avrm.gov.mk Internet: www.avrm.gov.mk
ESA Kumanovo	Todor Velkov b.b.	Tel.: 031/ 422-07
ESA Stip	Goce Delcev 91	Tel. : 032/ 385-339
ESA Bitola	Gjorce Petrov b.b.	Tel. : 047/ 237-154

2. Organizations providing assistance in the employment sector

Name of the Organization	Address	Contact
DEKRA	Crvena Voda 7/1, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3230 952 Email: info@dekra.mk Internet: www.dekra.mk
Vrabetovanje.com	Vasil Gorgov 24/1-5, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3213 065 Email: regrutacija@vrabetovanje.com.mk Internet: www.vrabetovanje.com.mk
Najdirabota	Ohridska 76, 7000 Bitola	Tel.: 0038977 922 080 Email: contact@najdirabota.com.mk Internet: www.najdirabota.com.mk

E. FINANCIAL SECTOR

I. Main banks and financial institutions

Name of the Bank	Address	Contact
National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia	Blvd Kuzman Josifovski Pitu 1 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3108 108 Email: info@nbrm.mk Internet: www.nbrm.mk
Stopanska Banka AD Skopje	11 OKTOMVRI, 1000 SKOPJE	Tel.: 00389 2 3100-109 Email: kontaktcentar@stb.com.mk Internet: www.stb.com.mk

Name of the Bank	Address	Contact
NLB Tutunska Banka AD Skopje	Bull. Mother Teresa no. 1, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 02 / 15 600 Email: info@nlb.mk Internet: www.nlb.mk
Komercijalna Banka AD Skopje	Orce Nikolov 3, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3168-168 Email: contact@kb.com.mk Internet: www.kb.com.mk

2. Organizations providing assistance in the financial sector

Name of the Organization	Address	Contact
Macedonian Bank for Development Promotion	Dimitrie Cupovski 26, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3115 844 Email: info@mbdp.com.mk Internet: www.mdbp.com.mk
FULM Savings House	Sv. Kiril i Metodij 48, Skopje 1000	Tel.: 02/3217-912 Email: info@fulm.com.mk Internet: www.fulm.com.mk
TIGO Finance	Vasil Glavinov 14, 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 324 4802 Email: info@tigo.mk Internet: www.tigo.mk

F. MAIN TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES

Name of the Company	Address	Contact
Skopje Bus Station/Rule Tours	Nikola Karev No.20., 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 02 2466 313 Email: info@sas.com.mk Internet: www.sas.com.mk
Macedonian Railways	Nikola Karev No.20., 1000 Skopje	Tel.: 00389 2 3248 701 Email: mztransportad@t-home.mk Internet: www.mzt.mk
Durmo Tours		Tel.: 00389 42 217 370 Email: durmotours@yahoo.com Internet: www.durmotours.com.mk
EuroTunist Gostivar	Boulevard Goce Delchev, Gostivar 1230	Tel.: +389 70 610 030 Email: euroturist.gv@gmail.com Internet: www.euroturistgv.mk



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency

For more information on return and reintegration possibilities on this country, please consult the IOM Bern office and/or visit <http://www.ch.iom.int/>