



# MAR 2021



## HIGHLIGHTS

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## KEY DATES

### FEBRUARY

- 18** - UUNODC organized an online meeting with the Customs Administration of North Macedonia to discuss the upcoming Gap and Needs Assessment (GNA) intended to increase the capacity of the Customs of North Macedonia to detect firearms, their parts, components, and ammunition in postal and fast courier shipments.

### MARCH

- 1-5** - UNODC organized the first part of the Basic Practical Training for officers of Customs and Border Police of North Macedonia that are to be engaged in the future inter-agency group at the Skopje International Airport, as part of the UNODC-EU joint action on enhanced border control, funded by the European Union.
- 3-4** - In collaboration with the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal migration of North Macedonia, UNODC organized a Regional Expert Group Meeting (REGM) on "Access to Effective Remedies for Victims of Trafficking in Persons in South Eastern Europe".
- 8** - UN Women held a coordinative meeting with the Ministry of Defense to discuss future cooperation regarding the implementation of the 2nd NAP of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and advancing gender equality in the area of women, peace and security.
- 16** - Launch of the spring semester of the Refugee Law Clinic, a refugee law programme established in September 2018 by the Faculty of Law "Iustinianus Primus" in Skopje as a strategic partnership between the Faculty and the UNHCR Representation in North Macedonia.

## EDITORIAL by the UN Resident Coordinator

You may still remember the early days of the COVID-19 crisis, with images of clear skies, city skylines reappearing from smog and dolphin sightings close to shores due to the halt of so many human activities. These images are a vivid reminder of what humankind can do instantly to reduce our ecological footprint. They are also proof that it is not too late to restore our planet's natural richness and create or maintain a sustainable environment to live in.

During the early days of the pandemic we witnessed cities investing in environmentally friendly and sustainable solutions such as expanding bike lanes or pedestrian areas, inspired by the vision to build back better. Many government officials and decision-makers committed to ensure an environmentally friendly recovery, in line with UN Secretary General's appeal.

A year later, some of these promises have not been fully upheld. A [recent study](#) by the UN and Oxford University reveals that only 18 percent of COVID-19-related government support packages of the 50 largest economies in 2020 were assessed as 'green', with some recovery packages even supporting fossil fuel industries. In North Macedonia, the government support packages have not been sufficiently evaluated for their carbon footprint and environmental impact lens, but such an assessment should be considered. Similar to other countries, there seems to be scope to put greater focus on measures and criteria for redirecting activities towards more climate-friendly interventions as part of the COVID-19 recovery.

I am happy to say that some important environment-related activities have continued in North Macedonia despite the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. A new national park – Shar Mountain – is in the making, thanks to the dedicated work of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the German cooperation, state faculties and many civil society organizations and activists such as platform "Friends

of Shara", the Macedonian Ecological Society, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and EuroNatur. This will result in an improved and more sustainable management of natural resources. Furthermore, activities on preservation of the biodiversity in the Ohrid Lake are also progressing, as well as on further strengthening the management of protected areas throughout the country. In late 2020, North Macedonia also committed to an ambitious national target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to enhance its nationally determined contributions.



Many challenges lie ahead to achieve a true 'green recovery', which should address the pressing national environmental challenges such as reducing emissions that contribute to air pollution, and solid waste and wastewater management problems. When focusing on mid- and long-term recovery, these opportunities should be seized and "green" should be mainstreamed in all aspects of our work. Economic growth and environmental sustainability need to be seen as closely interlinked.

The solutions introduced need to be complementary and mutually reinforcing, and applicable at all levels – through communities' and individuals' actions. As available financial resources remain limited, investing wisely on measures that simultaneously accelerate economic and green recovery needs to be one of our key decision-making criterions.

**Rossana Dudziak**  
UN Resident Coordinator in North Macedonia

# COVID-19 RESPONSE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

UN entities continue to support COVID-19 response in the country with specific and detailed analysis focused on issues within their respective fields of expertise.

**International Labour Organisation (ILO)** supported the 2nd round on enterprise survey “[Evolving challenges and expectations facing Macedonian enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)”. The vast majority of enterprises (83%) resumed their operations in the fourth quarter of 2020; most (86 %) recorded a decline in revenues due to COVID-19 compared 2019 and a significant share (64 %) used their own reserves to make up for inconsistent or insufficient cash flow. Similar as in April-May 2020, only a small proportion of enterprises (12 %) resorted to dismissing workers despite the massive economic challenges brought by the pandemic. To build business resilience, over half of the enterprises (52%) offered new products and services or modified the existing, and implemented teleworking, an option rarely used prior to the pandemic (9%). Larger share of enterprises (61%) expressed relative dissatisfaction with the adequacy of anti-crisis measures, while 47% thought that the Government addressed key business demands in the fourth package of economic support measures.

On 23 March, **World Health Organization (WHO)** presented the results of a joint WHO-Ministry of Health project “Support for public health and emergency care during the second wave of COVID-19 in North Macedonia”, funded by the UK. The short-term project rolled out quick and evidence-based interventions to support the recently repurposed workforce in providing safe and quality COVID-19 care by developing and conducting accelerated special training to health workers on various aspects of infection control and prevention in health care settings, COVID-19 care and mental health.

**UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** [donated IT equipment, PPE and bedding](#) to the General Hospital in Gevgelija and to the local Centre for Social Work. Both institutions have continuously offered services to refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in the south of the country, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

**United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** launched a [joint European Union \(EU\)-UNODC action](#) on promoting rule of law and good governance through targeted border control measures at ports and airports. The action is implemented through cooperation with the UNODC-WCO [Container Control Programme \(CCP\)](#) and the UNODC-WCO-INTERPOL [Airport Communication Project \(AIRCOP\)](#) with the [UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe](#). In North Macedonia, the Government, represented by the Ministry of Interior, and UNODC formally agreed to pursue cooperation in the area of enhanced border control initiative by signing a joint Letter of Agreement (LoA).

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is engaged in promoting the upcoming Operational

plan of active labour measures and programmes, focusing on piloting care economy approaches tailored to the country while tackling three fronts at once: better social care for the most vulnerable, new jobs for women and relief from the unpaid care work that so often delays women’s employment.

**UN Women** supported the 12th Edition of the [Women’s Rights Nights \(WRN\)](#), a cultural alternative in commemorating the International Women’s Day, under the patronage of the City of Skopje, implemented by the Institute for Human Rights and Award Film & Video from Skopje. WRN12 hosted the screening of the movies “Women’s Day” and “Forte” on the online platform cinesquare.net, an online debate “Crisis are not gender neutral: How women’s leadership influences gender equality in times of COVID-19?”, and the international exhibition “Awakening 2”, with artworks by women artists. In May, movies will be screened at the summer cinema in Kinoteka, in Skopje.

UN Women hosted the second Advisory Board meeting of the project “Promoting gender-responsive policies and budgets: towards transparent, inclusive and accountable governance in the Republic of North Macedonia”, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Key achievements in the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting, including important developments in the national policy and legal framework for advancing gender equality, were discussed.

UN Women provided support for the evaluation on the progress in the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2013-2020). Key observations, recommendations and new strategic priorities were shared during the public hearing organized by the Parliamentary Commission for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men in early March.

The Migration Governance Index (MGI) will be applied for the first time in North Macedonia under the “Evidence-based migration policy planning and discourse in North Macedonia” project jointly implemented by the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**, **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** and UNHCR. MGI offers insight into policy levers that countries can use to develop their migration governance; it is designed to help countries assess the comprehensiveness of their migration policies and identify gaps and areas that could be strengthened.

WHO organized an online discussion “Older people dialogue” on 22 March, to present the results of WHO assessment of the health and ageing-relevant health care in North Macedonia, conducted between 09/2019 and 01/2020. The assessment highlighted the available national demographic information of the elderly population group, their vulnerability and specific health conditions, as well as the need to achieve universal health coverage and transform health services, working towards more focused, integrated and person-centred care.

Under Global Environment Facility (GEF) STAR5 project, **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**

co-organized an initial [online event](#) that marked the beginning of the implementation of the activity to select two pilot corridors from the proposed National Ecological Network (MAK-NEN) for development and testing of site-specific measures involving local stakeholders for management and restoration of High Nature Value Forests and other habitats.

**UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** continues its work on capacitating civil servants on the EU integration process through the Nordic Support for Progress of North Macedonia project. A series of trainings were organized in March for the Secretariat for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Ministry of Economy and other government institutions in different aspects of the EU accession process.

With the support of UNHCR, the Center for Refugee Law and Migration (Faculty of Law in Skopje) and the Center for Legal Clinical Education – Refugee Law and Migration Center conducted a research [Refugees and migration in the context of the Balkan route](#). The research focused on the public, political and media discourse in North Macedonia in the context of refugees, migration, xenophobia, islamophobia and nationalism during the campaign leading 2020 parliamentary elections. The research covers the period October 2019 to 15 July 2020.

On 17 March, **United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)** and partners marked one year of the Eduino web portal for digital education, coordination and professional development. The Eduino portal is part of the Social Cohesion and Cultural Dialogue, Foundations for the Future Programme financially supported by the UK Government and implemented by UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and is managed by Bureau for Development of Education with support from SmartUp - Social Innovation Lab.

The President of North Macedonia, Stevo Pendarovski, and UNICEF announced a new joint initiative ‘Reimagine the Future’, to give children and young people the space to engage in defining the vision they want for their future and future generations. Over the next three months, young people will be given the chance to join consultations to discuss issues that matter to them, their biggest challenges, hopes for the future of the country and the space to propose solutions to turn the vision into reality.

ILO supported the Organization of Employers of Macedonia to develop a new service and carry out the first comprehensive salary survey in the private sector [competitiveSALARY](#), aiming to provide companies with relevant information on the labour costs for 178 job profiles and positions, so that they can optimize and upgrade their human resource policies, and be more competitive.

The Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia (SSM) initiated the ratification of ILO Convention 190 Violence and Harassment at Work, which was unanimously accepted by all social partners at the 10th session of the Economic and Social Council, held on 18 March 2021.

The North Macedonia 2021-2025 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) is implemented through the country programme instruments of the UN development system entities that have signed the SDCF, and which are derived from the SDCF. Individual programme and strategic documents of UNHCR and UNODC are presented in detail below.



## UNHCR Country Programme Document

In line with its global organizational changes, UNHCR North Macedonia has developed multi-year country strategy by using global futures and foresight methods and other novel approaches to provide innovative solutions to challenges within its mandate. UNHCR engages a diverse range of actors to contribute to sustainable development and an inclusive society, where all refugees are protected and no one is stateless.

To realize our vision, UNHCR focuses on the following strategic transformations and priorities:

- 1) Support anticipatory governance capabilities. Work with national and local governments, UN agencies and civil society (including academia, media, and citizens) to build anticipatory capabilities to shift to long-term, agile public policies, improve resilience and priority setting as a way to advance the protection agenda in the country. Participatory design will be utilized to support North Macedonia in generating conditions to address impending issues and their root causes.
- 2) Transform the public narrative about refugees by fostering change and building positive attitudes and behaviours in communities and the society. Broaden the platform of stakeholders to combat misinformation and divisive narrative. To improve the existing narrative around refugees and immigration, and drive lasting societal change, a novel approach to communications will be designed. A better understanding of refugee issues will lead to an increase in the protection space, stimulate a more favourable environment for integration and improve protection of those in need.
- 3) Reinforce advocacy by strategically engaging with a broad range of selected stakeholders to mobilize support, including people of concern and civil society as actors of change.
- 4) Support protection-sensitive entry system. Sensitize and capacitate the national counterparts to fully uphold their responsibilities for ensuring effective access to territory of persons in need of international protection. UNHCR supports the establishment of systemic registration, protection-sensitive profiling, and adequate referral of all individuals arriving in mixed-movement, to ensure no one is left behind.
- 5) Improve quality of asylum. Support the establishment of an asylum system fully compliant

with international standards, ensuring systemic unhindered access to asylum, fair and efficient processing of asylum claims, including substantial judicial review, free sustainable and quality legal aid, as well as adequate reception standards.

6) Support preparedness for humanitarian protection response. Support national authorities and all humanitarian and protection partners to ensure preparedness for adequate humanitarian and protection response, in case of influx of refugees/migrants, including: regular risk analysis and monitoring, as well as development of a contingency plan, aligned to the level of risk of influx.

7) Foster solutions. Pursuing the goal of improving the asylum system, influence legislative and policy changes to generate optimal conditions for local integration of refugees and inclusion of asylum seekers, whereby they have full access to rights as per the international standards and national legislation. Protracted displacement of refugees from Kosovo should end in a dignified and sustainable manner. As a contribution to the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, complementary pathways would be piloted, initially in the area of education.

8) End statelessness in North Macedonia by 2024, within the framework set by the [#IBelong Campaign](#) and support North Macedonia in this ambition.



## UNODC strategy 2021-2025

On 18 February 2021, the UNODC Executive Director formally launched the new [UNODC Strategy 2021-2025](#) that defines UNODC vision and will guide its work in South-Eastern Europe and globally.

The Strategy advances the central mission of UNODC – to contribute to global peace and security, human rights and development by making the world safer from drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism – and tailor UNODC support in the pandemic and beyond, while underscoring the organization's commitment to human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the protection of children and harnessing the transformative power of youth.

It focuses on five main thematic areas, which integrate both policy and programmatic work: (1) addressing and countering the world drug problem, (2) preventing and countering organized crime, (3) preventing and countering corruption and economic crime, (4) preventing and countering terrorism, and (5) crime prevention and criminal justice.

To tackle these challenges that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC relies on a wide field presence that provides regional and national knowledge, and high-quality research and analysis.

UNODC will use its strengths in bringing countries together to transfer knowledge, skills and information to address common challenges and find effective

solutions at the operational, legal and political levels. Strengthened coordination and integration across UNODC will ensure that the normative, research and technical assistance work are mutually reinforcing and able to draw on each other – working to rapidly identify new trends and threats, to develop the responses that are needed to counter them and to share this knowledge and put it into practice to support Member States.

A key to its successful implementation will be the expanded use of partnerships with a broader range of stakeholders. Effective communication, internally to improve cross-fertilization across thematic areas and externally to showcase the impact of our work, will also be critical. UNODC will review and adjust its internal structures, systems and processes so that we can use the full potential of our staff to meet the rapidly evolving needs of Member States; and employ innovation, leverage new technologies and create an organizational culture that is based on trust, respect and accountability.

The Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe (RP SEE), which provides the framework for UNODC activities in the region, including North Macedonia, supports the jurisdictions of the region in their efforts against the challenges posed by organized crime and corruption. In 2020, UNODC has further strengthened its presence in and cooperation with North Macedonia under three major projects in the country and the region to address these issues:

- 1) Joint EU-UNODC action on promoting rule of law and good governance through targeted border control measures at ports and airports;
- 2) Development of a Regional Roadmap on Anti-Corruption and Illicit Finance to improve implementation of existing anti-corruption and illicit finance measures; and
- 3) Regional project on Criminal Justice Response against Arms Trafficking, aimed at supporting the six Western Balkan jurisdictions, including North Macedonia in strengthening their criminal justice response to firearms related criminality, particularly illicit arms trafficking.

Through these main activities, UNODC RP SEE aims to further support the national authorities in facing the global challenges in line with the priorities outlined in the UNODC strategy along with the tools to achieve results, including enhanced communication, cooperation and cross-fertilization.



## Data is the greatest asset of the 21st century. Do we use it to its full potential?

### Who wants to talk about data?

We do not see many hands raised. No surprise. Data was one of those unpopular topics in the past. Generating value from data was often an isolated concern of information technology or operations professionals, or geospatial and statistics experts. It was packaged in numerous reports, shelved away or stored on someone's computers.

### Has this changed?









It did and COVID-19 pandemic further emphasized the importance of data and numbers: number of hospital beds, testing capacities, masks needed, of infected and casualties and so on. The importance of timely, quality, open and disaggregated data and statistics has been reemphasized by the COVID-19 crisis. Who are the people at highest risk of falling into poverty? How many lost jobs? Who and how many need urgent support, where are they? This data is critical in understanding, managing and mitigating the human, social and economic effects of the pandemic. Was it easily available? No. This data is also essential for designing mid- and long-term responses and accelerated actions to put the country back on track towards sustainable development, and with that, sustain the achievement of the SDGs and the progress made towards the EU accession reforms.

### The importance of constant generation of real-time, accurate and quality data

Good quality data inform leaders, engage civil servants and involve citizens in evidence-based policy making built on real-time data that enable agile strategic planning. Responsible "data action" helps tackle priorities faster and better.

A population and households Census is the most important source of data that enables good understanding of needs of the population in a country – from general trends to the fine and interlinked variances between those living in urban and rural communities, younger and old, men and women, education, income, different abilities and interests. Population-related data in North Macedonia is outdated and incomplete to the extent that it can misguide policies that are aimed at those who need them the most and create, instead of eliminating discrimination. Inaccurate data also leads to inefficient planning and spending of scarce public funds. For example: there is no precise number of people with disabilities in the country. This prevents the state at both local and national level to design appropriate policies and services, and the appropriate planning of service delivery is challenging. The lack of sufficient number of trained and certified personal assistants is one such concrete example.

Therefore, there is a consensus that conducting the census, a strictly professional statistical operation based on the Fundamental Principles of Official

 <p><b>Priority 1</b> <b>DECADE OF ACTION</b></p> <p>At the heart of the 2030 Agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. For the Decade of Action, we will leverage the UN family's data potential everywhere we can and aim to mobilize governments, civil society and businesses.</p>	 <p><b>Priority 2</b> <b>CLIMATE ACTION</b></p> <p>Climate change is already affecting every country on every continent, impacting lives and disrupting economies, both now and in the future. We will put emphasis on employing data and analytics for urgent climate action.</p>	 <p><b>Priority 3</b> <b>GENDER EQUALITY</b></p> <p>25 years after the historic Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, where the Beijing Platform for Action was agreed upon, full gender equality around the world is still not a reality. Together with global partners, we will build better gender data and analytics capabilities.</p>	 <p><b>Priority 4</b> <b>HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW</b></p> <p>Powered by the SG's Call to Action on Human Rights, we will form global coalitions for human rights-based approaches to data, fight hate speech online while upholding freedoms and strengthen human rights monitoring.</p>
 <p><b>Priority 5</b> <b>PEACE AND SECURITY</b></p> <p>We will leverage data and analytics for the prevention, mediation and resolution of conflicts: for stronger analysis and recommendations, to deploy peacekeepers faster to where they are needed most, and to protect civilians and UN personnel.</p>	 <p><b>Priority 6</b> <b>GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS FOR THE FUTURE</b></p> <p>In support of stronger global digital cooperation, we will help foster dialogue, the collaborative design and the implementation of data policies that advance the responsible human-rights-based use of data and drive innovation for people and planet.</p>	 <p><b>Priority 7</b> <b>UN REFORM</b></p> <p>To accelerate UN reform, we will foster centres of excellence that catalyze stronger data and analytics capabilities, help account for reform benefits, foster transparency, raise performance, and build resilient supply chains.</p>	 <p><b>Priority 8</b> <b>DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY</b></p> <p>Building on our Data Protection and Privacy Principles, our ambition is to strengthen dialogue with public and private stakeholders, and champion data protection and privacy capacity in the UN family.</p>

*Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere with Insight, Impact and Integrity*

Statistics and international statistical standards and practices, is a priority for North Macedonia. Census conducted per combined methodology of field visits and usage of administrative registries, collected in a computer database is a great step forward in utilizing technology for faster and cheaper collection of data, cleaning and analysis, that will enable much faster release of the long-awaited results.

Technology is key for data management in the 21st century to support collection and storage, and – in way unthinkable decades ago – for its real-time generation as "big data" that we derive from using mobile phones, social media, satellite/drone imageries or even people's emotions recorded by sensors installed around us. Analysis have been made possible, affordable, easier and faster, and the drive for visualization has made data understandable and closer – to experts and broader public.

### Building analytics and monitoring capacities is equally important

Technology is yet to be utilized to its full potential, as is the need for building national collective capabilities in data management and creating a culture of utilization of foresight methodologies for evidence-based strategic planning. Lacking horizontal governance creates data siloes, hampers collaboration, and impedes data quality and use. Managing, using and sharing data will be integral for the success in the years ahead, yet, data is not treated as a shared strategic asset that creates optimal value. However, getting to a stage where data capabilities are truly transformational will not happen overnight. A commitment to fully data-driven country, where data is central to all strategies, drives innovation, is integrated across the ecosystems and delivers optimal value for the people is the first step on this journey.

### UN is fully committed to support building data capacities

As committed in its 2021-2025 UN Sustainable

Development Cooperation Framework, UN in North Macedonia will support national authorities in generating basic, reliable and disaggregated data on a regular basis to promote evidence-based decision-making, long-term strategic visioning and SDG monitoring and reporting. It will support the Census as a key milestone for ensuring reliable data as well as the processes to develop new national strategic planning documents. Finally, it will promote anticipatory governance aimed to enhance the strategic planning capacity of the institutions.

### Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere with Insight, Impact and Integrity

Data permeates all aspects of UN work. UN footprint, expertise and connectedness create unique opportunities to advance global "data action" with insight, impact and integrity. To help unlock its full potential, 50 UN entities jointly designed the first UN collective Data Strategy as a comprehensive playbook for data-driven change aimed at building the data, digital, technology and innovation capabilities that the UN needs to succeed in the 21st century.

### UN Country Data strategy to guide UN support is under development

UN in North Macedonia will develop its localized country data strategy that will operationalize the UN's global efforts and upgrade its localized data capacity. It will be a detailed action plan to deliver against the SDCF commitment to support the national efforts to better utilize the potential of data with the objective to bring the country closer to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and accelerate SDGs implementation.

The latest version of the Sustainable Development Bulletin is available on UN North Macedonia website. For additional information, please contact [rc-northmacedonia@un.org](mailto:rc-northmacedonia@un.org). Produced by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in North Macedonia | 12 April 2021