

Macedonia (2009)

Report by
Zlatko Teodosievski, art historian
Senior curator in the National Gallery of Macedonia
Skopje

Introduction - Key Issues

On the territory of Macedonia, there are only 23 museums that are open to the public: 16 general museums and 7 specialized¹. All 23 museums (16 national and 7 local) are state owned². The museum network is nearly the same as it had been before gaining the independence (1992), meaning that no new museum has been built for nearly thirty years! There are also 20 museum collections. There have been few initiatives for opening private museums in the past, but still nothing has been done in this direction.

Following the Government's initiative in 2008, the building of 2 new museums have started: the museum complex Macedonian Struggle in Skopje and the Museum on water in Ohrid.

The Museum on water was opened to the public by the end of 2008. The museum represents a reconstruction of a settlement from the Iron and Bronze ages which, according to the investigations, spread on approximately 8.500 square meters. A reconstruction of a pile-dwelling settlement was made, identical to the underwater archaeological site (1200-700 B.C.).

The museum complex Macedonian Struggle should be finished by 2011.

Museums are responsible for the protection of moveable cultural heritage. According to the latest data, of the total number of 490 000 museum pieces, the greatest number are archaeological artefacts and zoological museum pieces. Out of them it is considered that the most important are the archaeological artefacts that have been collected and preserved in Macedonian museums. The majority of them are housed in the museums in Skopje – about 33 000, as follows: about 21 000 in the Museum of Macedonia and 12 000 in the Museum of the City of Skopje, then 15 000 at Stobi Archeological Museum, more than 13 000 in Ohrid, etc. As for other kinds of moveable heritage, 22 855 old icons have been recorded (500 of first category), nearly 450 mediaeval Slavic manuscripts in

¹ To a certain extent, the National and University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" (for medieval manuscripts) and the Cinémathèque (Film Archive) of Macedonia (for films) also play a role.

² There are few private collections that are also open to public but they can hardly be called museum collections. A kind of curiosity is the small ethnological collection of 1.150 pieces on only 7.2 sq.m. It is said that this "collection" has been visited by 11.000 visitors!

Macedonia and 698 abroad (it is assessed that a few thousands of them are housed in foreign libraries, museums, archives and private collections), over 4 500 old oriental manuscripts, tens of thousands of old ethnological pieces, about a hundred thousand pieces of film and photographic material, etc.

There is no official museum policy document yet, but the key issues and priorities have been stated in the National Program for Culture 2004-2008:

- establishing sustainable conditions for the museums, national and local, according to the world standards,
- encouraging projects and activities to attract visitors to the museums and developing marketing models,
- supporting archeological investigations for cultural, scientific and tourist purpose,
- publishing catalogues of the public museum collections and
- supporting the development of new museum forms of activities.

There is no formal national museum network, but there is national ICOM Association.

Museum-related Laws / Definition of a Museum

In 2004 the new *Law on Museums* was adopted by the Parliament. It defines the museum as public non-profit cultural institution in service of the society that collects, documents, stores and conserves, researches, exhibits and popularizes the museum material (movable heritage) in the public³.

In accordance with this definition, a museum is therefore an institution that:

- carries out research, protection, storage, conservation and presentation of museum material,
- ensures appropriate premises for the protection, storage and conservation of material as well as other necessary premises for the work of the museum and its staff and for exhibiting material,
- ensures appropriate equipment for museum premises intended for the protection, storage and conservation of museum material,
- ensures accessibility of museum material and collections for the visit and for research work,
- organizes permanent exhibitions, temporary exhibitions, traveling and other exhibitions,
- organizes seminars, workshops, lectures and other popular educative forms,
- publishes books, catalogues, guides and other publications.

The Law on Museums also defines the public services in this field, the work, types (national, local and private) and the organisation of the museums etc. It specifies certain rules for founding a museum: financial means, building and

³ The Law on Museums actually defines museum activities rather than museum itself.

equipment, highly educated staff etc. The Minister of Culture decides whether these rules are met. The Law on Museums also defines the responsibility of the government to cover the insurance costs for certain foreign exhibitions.

According to this Law, the National Council for Museums was established. The National Council for Museums is the professional consultative body at the Ministry of Culture. It monitors and supervises the implementation of public service within the framework of the museum network. It also offers proposals for performing the public service in this field, proposes changes and additions to the museum network, makes suggestions for resolving specific issues and proposes appropriate measures, etc.

]

Another important museum related law is the *Law for Protection of Cultural Heritage* (2004). Among other things it defines the two main categories of cultural heritage (movable and immovable), establishes legal provisions and introduces stricter controls to the cultural heritage, stipulates the public right of access to cultural heritage, regulates the archaeological researches, including foreign archaeological researchers operating in Macedonia, introduces penalties for offenders etc.

Types of Museums

In December 2003, the government passed the *Decision on the Network of National Institutions in the Field of Culture*. According to this Decision, 15 (from the previous 22) museums gained the status of national institutions that are completely financed by the Ministry of Culture. The other 7 museums are considered local and are financed by the local governments (salaries, running costs etc.). The local institutions can still apply for annual funding from the Ministry of Culture for programmes and specific projects. Since June 2005 this division of jurisdiction has been put into practice.

So, regarding the ownership the museums in Macedonia are classified as: public (16 national and 7 local) and private.

Regarding the subject of their work there are 10 general (complex) national museums, 6 specialized national museums, 6 general (complex) local and 1 specialized local museum.

Regarding their professional field of work (type of collection) there are museums for the following fields:

- archaeology,
- numismatics,
- history,
- arts,
- ethnological heritage,
- technical heritage,
- natural history.

Finance

The Ministry of Culture is still the main source of funding for the national museums. It provides regular annual funding to the museums on two bases:

- salaries, running costs (such as heating, insurance of equipment, buildings, exhibits), investments, etc., and
- specific projects / programmes on the basis of annual competition.

The local self-governments provide regular annual funding for the local museums. Still, local museums can apply for annual funding from the Ministry of Culture for programmes and specific projects.

In 2005 the Ministry of Culture supported 217 museum projects (59 archaeological, 59 ethnological, 44 historical, 16 natural history, 19 arts, etc.) with total of (together with the National Cinemateque) 45.000.000 MKD (725.000 euros), which was 3.71% of the total cultural budget for that year.

In the past several years the museums budget (together with the National Cinemateque) has rapidly grown and in 2007 it was 183.857.000 MKD (2.965.435 euros) and the estimation for 2010 is 397.163.000 MKD (6.405.854 euros).

Basic Tables and Figures (2009)⁴

Table 1: Museums in Republic of Macedonia

Regarding ownership	National	Local	Total
Public	16	7	23
Private		-	
Regarding subject of work			
General national		10	
Specialized national		6	
General local		6	
Specialized local		1	
Private		-	
Total		23	

Macedonian museums have a total of 47.671 sq. meters, of which 27.458 sq. meters are exhibition halls, 5.827 are depots, 1.619 are for laboratories for conservation and preparation etc.

⁴ Most of the figures used in the tables are from the Report 2.1.10.12 of the State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia

A total of 449 employees (226 female) work in the Macedonian museums, of which 280 are professional staff (150 female) and 160 other personnel.

The majority of the museum professionals work as curators (or senior curator and curator-adviser), and other professional positions (considered as "technical museum occupations") are museum technicians, conservators, preparation workers, photographers etc.

Table 2: Exhibits by type of collections

Type of inventoried exhibits	Number
Archaeological	122 891
Ethnological	40 224
Historical	56 437
Arts	6 672
Technical	-
Paleontological	17 964
Geological	471
Zoological	256 200
Botanical	14 707
Other	54 525
Inventoried exhibits - total	570 091
Exhibits on display	32 490

Table 3: Exhibitions and visitors

Exhibitions	Museum's exhibitions	Imported exhibitions	Total
	158	56	214
Visitors	856.731	23.618	880.349

The number of visitors to the exhibitions in 2009 was nearly 6 times more than in 2006!

Table 4: Museum collections in Republic of Macedonia

Regarding the ownership	National	Local	Total
Public	13	7	20
Private		-	
Regarding the subject of work			
Museum collection		11	
Independent museum coll.		7	
Gallery		1	
Independent gallery coll.		1	
Total		20	

The museum collections have 295 327 inventoried exhibits, of which 8 317 were displayed.

Statistical survey

The general statistical survey is being conducted by the State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia. As a regular survey it is conducted every third year.

List of References

Portals and directories of museums

State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia (www.stat.gov.mk)

Ministry of Culture (www.kultura.gov.mk)