

Macedonia (2011)

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Introduction - Key Issues

Until 2009, on the territory of Macedonia, there were only 22 museums opened to the public. The museum network was nearly the same as it had been before gaining the independence (1992), meaning that no new museum was built for nearly thirty years! It is important to underline that in the past two years several new museums have been opened: *Museum on water* (2009) in Ohrid, *Memorial house of Mother Theresa* (2009), *Museum of Macedonian Struggle* (2011) in Skopje and *Memorial house of Tose Proevski* (2011) in Krusevo. All four new museums are national institutions.

The *Museum on water* 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 of Macedonian Struggle for Independence* is a historic museum that presents the Macedonian fight for autonomy and independence through a specific set of wax figures, paintings, photographs and facsimiles. The *Memorial house of Mother Theresa* is dedicated to the humanitarian Mother Theresa, and was built on the very location of the once Sacred Heart of Jesus Roman Catholic Church, where Mother Teresa was baptized. The *Memorial house of Tose Proeski* (recently died Macedonian pop singer) stores some 350 authentic items.

However, there have been a lot of public argument about the controversial procedure that was carried out for the opening of some of this museums. Namely, contrary to the *Law on Museums*, all the work, even on the permanent displays in the museum, have been done by the Ministry of culture, without appointing any managing or professional staff in the museums¹.

So, in 2011 there are: 1 museum of natural history, 5 historical museums, 17 general (complex) museums, 1 Museum of Contemporary Art, 1 National Gallery

¹ On the other hand, according to their scope and displays, some of these museums can hardly be called that, especially the *Memorial house of Tose Proeski* (recently died pop star), or even the *Memorial house of Mother Theresa*.

and 1 specialized museum². All 26 museums (19 national and 7 local) are state owned³.

There have been few initiatives for opening private museums in the past, but still nothing has been done in this direction.

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 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 public⁴.

² 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.

³ There are few private collections that are also open to public but they can hardly be called museum collections.

⁴ The Law on Museums actually defines museum activities rather than museum itself.

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 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.

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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 were considered local and were 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.

Today, regarding the ownership, the museums in Macedonia are classified as: public (19 national and 7 local) and private (0).

Regarding the subject of their work there are 1 museum of natural history, 5 historical museums, 17 general (complex) museums, 1 Museum of Contemporary Art, 1 National Gallery and 1 specialized museum

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

- archaeology,
- 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 two 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), in 2008 it was 372.215.000 MKD (6.003.467 euros) and 379.064.000 MKD (6.113.935 euros) in 2009.

Table 1: Ministry of culture, Sector breakdown, in MKD, 2008-2009

Sector	2009	2008
Protection of Cultural Heritage	440 482 000	588 668 000
Museums and National Cinemateque	379 064 000	372 215 000
Visual Arts	17 940 000	17 640 000
Publishing	73 121 000	112 600 000
Libraries	197 924 000	204 413 000
Film	121 296 000	157 906 000
Performing Arts	1 107 991 000	1 072 646 000
International co-operation	122 470 000	81 500 000
Cultural events, festivals, other manifestations	91 906 000	76 183 000
TOTAL	2 552 194 000	2 683 771 000
Total in EUR	41 164 419	43 286 629

Source: Ministry of Finance, 2010

Basic Tables and Figures (2009-2011)⁵

Table 2: Museums in Republic of Macedonia, 2011

Regarding the ownership	National	Local	Total
Public	19	7	26
Private		-	
Regarding the subject of work			
General national		10	
Specialized national		9	
General local		6	
Specialized local		1	
Private		-	
Total		26	

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 (2009).

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.

⁵ 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

Table 3: Exhibits by type of collections, 2009

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 4: Exhibitions and visitors, 2009

Exhibitions	Museum's exhibitions	Imported exhibitions	Traveling exhibitions	Exhibitions abroad	Total
	158	56	56	17	287
Visitors	856.731	23.618	39.333	37.500	957.182

An important issue that should be mentioned here is the enormously increased number of visitors (Macedonia still counts visitors, not visits!) in the past two years. The data given in the newest research by the State Statistical Office shows that in 2009 there were 880.349 visitors in the Macedonian museums, and that is nearly 6 times more compared to 2006! Although the State Statistic Office does not comment the given data, this number should be taken with precaution. Because, having in mind that Macedonia has approximately 2.000.000 inhabitants, it means that every second person has visited a museum in 2009!(?).

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.culture.gov.mk).