

Enabling Social Innovation in North Macedonia

Country Snapshot

Social innovation: "the processes and outcomes of developing novel approaches to address societal challenges facing people and planet." ¹

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from North Macedonia's social innovation ecosystem.

✓ Direct focus on social innovation 🔗 Connected but indirect focus on social innovation ✗ No focus on social innovation

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK



Official Definition of Social Innovation 🔗

There is no official legal definition. Government strategies frame social innovation as a novel response to social needs, typically through social enterprises ².



Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

No dedicated agency exists. The Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth leads on social entrepreneurship. A National Council for Social Entrepreneurship is proposed under pending legislation ³.



Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

The National Strategy for Development of Social Enterprises (2021–2027) promotes social innovation through legal reform, education, capacity building, market development, and access to finance ⁴.



Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗

There is no enacted law on social innovation. A draft Law on Social Enterprises (Dec 2025) aims to regulate recognition, functioning, support and development of social enterprises as innovative drivers for employment and economic growth, labor market integration of vulnerable groups. Indirect support comes from laws on donations, NGO tax exemptions, financial incentives and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) promotion ⁵.



Official Statistics 🔗

No official data on social innovation. The strategy calls for a Social Enterprise Register and ecosystem monitoring, but implementation is early-stage ⁶.



Government Programs ✓ 🔗

- National Center for Support of Social Enterprises (2021): Training, mentoring, piloted 8 regional hubs ⁷
- FITD Social Entrepreneurship Call (2021): MKD 6M (~€100k) grants for SDG-linked innovations ⁸
- Employment subsidies indirectly support inclusion-focused enterprises ²

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders

Civil society drives the ecosystem:

- RNO: Green/social enterprise incubator and organizer of Green Ideas ¹⁰
- Public: Advocacy and capacity-building NGO ¹¹
- SmartUp: Co-runs Skopje Lab with the city ¹²
- Donors: EU, USAID, UNDP, GIZ, OSF, Sectoral Networks
- Including all entities (NGOs, companies) mapped as social enterprises

Formal networks are limited. Informal peer groups and public platforms like Lice v Lice and the National Startup Council provide some connectivity ¹³.

Support Organisations

- Incubators: ARNO, Business Impact Lab, RYCO – Regional Youth Cooperation Office
- Capacity builders: Public, Konekt
- Research: Yunus Center for Social Business and Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship Observatory, MANU
- Community: Local CSOs launching micro-enterprises

Support Initiatives

- Green Ideas (ARNO): Seed funding and mentoring for local social ventures
- Social Impact Award: Youth-focused education and competition ¹⁴
- Social Enterprise Fairs: Held nationally and regionally
- Web platform – Social Entrepreneurship for youth employment ¹⁵
- Hackathons and Youth Labs: Run by UNDP, UNICEF

Collaboration

Examples include:

- FITD, now INOVA–NGO partnership in designing funding calls ¹⁶
- Skopje Lab: City–NGO urban innovation
- Multi-stakeholder Center for Social Enterprises

Events & Awards

- Social Enterprise Fairs and SIA ceremonies
- Philanthropy Forum, Entrepreneurship Week include SI tracks
- No dedicated national award yet, but some CSR awards include social innovation

FINANCE

Financing Schemes

Annual SI-dedicated funding is low. Key sources:

- Government: FITD call (~€100k);
- Donors: EU IPA, USAID, GIZ, UNDP grants
- Philanthropy: CSR and individual donations rising
- Crowdfunding: Nascent
- No impact funds or social bonds yet

Inclusiveness of Financing

Target groups include youth, women, Roma, groups in social risks, rural areas. Access remains uneven, especially outside urban hubs. Women and youth are well represented in early-stage programs.

SOCIETY



Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Growing, with increased media coverage and civic engagement. Still low among rural and older groups. Events and publications like Lice v Lice drive interest ¹⁷.



Research

Yunus Center for Social Business and Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, academic and practitioner research is emerging. Notable contributions from Chichevaliev and Social Entrepreneurship Observatory. Few peer-reviewed outputs.



Education & human capital

No dedicated SI degrees. Some university courses/programs, e.g. Faculty of Economics-Skopje, Faculty of Philosophy Skopje and NGO-led training exist. The 2021 strategy calls for SI integration across education levels. ¹⁸



Entrepreneurship



EIU Business Environment

Modest



Innovation Capacity



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

GEM: High necessity-driven entrepreneurship; low opportunity rate ²⁰



Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

Civic trust improving, but still low in institutions



Political participation



Volunteering



Sustainability

(strong on air quality, eco-consciousness)