



UNDP North Macedonia

2025

ANNUAL

REPORT



Foreword



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In 2025, UNDP marked 30 years of partnership with North Macedonia, a milestone that invites both reflection and renewed ambition. Over the past three decades, this partnership has evolved from support for local environmental protection and a transitioning economy into a broad and trusted collaboration that helps institutions, communities, and citizens respond to complex development challenges in practical and forward-looking ways. What has made this partnership meaningful is not only its duration, but also its ability to evolve with the country's needs and continue delivering results that improve people's lives.

This year showed clearly that development has the greatest impact when national vision is connected with local action. In 2025, UNDP continued to support North Macedonia in moving from strategy to implementation. Through support to the National Development Strategy, more than 1,200 citizens and experts helped define 90 concrete measures that will shape the

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country's direction in the years ahead. To help translate these priorities into practical investments, UNDP also introduced the NDS/SDG Investor Map, designed to connect national development goals with financing opportunities.

The results achieved in 2025 were both systemic and tangible. Across the country, UNDP-supported interventions contributed to 915 new jobs, with a focus on youth, Roma, and persons with disabilities. Support to 265 SMEs helped improve productivity, competitiveness, and the green transition, while 10,157 people benefited from community-based and social services. Nearly 5,000 unemployed people received employment activation and support services, and further investments in public administration learning, education reform, and skills development helped strengthen the foundations of a more inclusive and resilient economy.

The green transition also gained real momentum. Through USD 14.6 million in blended finance, UNDP supported

renewable energy and energy-efficiency investments for SMEs and underserved households. More than 40,000 square metres of new urban green spaces and corridors were created, while cybersecurity measures helped protect water services for more than 100,000 citizens. North Macedonia also strengthened its international profile by hosting the Fourteenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, which brought together more than 1,000 participants from over 70 countries in Skopje.

As we look ahead, our commitment remains clear. UNDP will continue to support North Macedonia in building stronger institutions, greener growth, more inclusive communities, and development pathways that leave no one behind. The experience of 2025 confirms that when partnership, strategy, and action come together, progress is not abstract, it becomes visible, measurable, and meaningful.



2025 IN BRIEF: FACTS & FIGURES



915 new jobs created,
with clear benefits for youth,
Roma, and persons with
disabilities



265 SMEs supported
to strengthen productivity,
competitiveness, and the green
transition



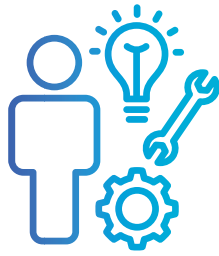
200 green jobs
supported through green
investments



4,995
unemployed individuals benefited
from employment activation and
support services



10,157 beneficiaries
accessed community-based and
social services



83 individuals improved their skills through VET and lifelong learning programmes



More than 1,200 participants engaged in the National Development Strategy process, proposing 90 measures



More than 5,000 citizens participated in community forums

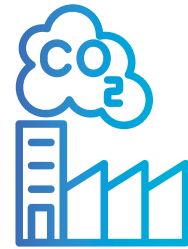


More than 100 young people contributed to the National Youth Strategy Action Plan 2026–2028



USD 13 million for SMEs and **USD 1.6 million** for underserved households mobilized through 300 green financing projects

41,715 tons of CO₂ emissions reduced annually



Over 40,000 m² of new urban green spaces and corridors established



More than 100,000 citizens secured through safer municipal water supply systems



More than 1,000 participants from over 70 countries attended IFESD-14

More than 1,200 participants joined nationwide events marking 30 years of UNDP in North Macedonia





CREATING JOB OPPORTU NITIES FOR ALL THROUGH INCLUSIVE GROWTH

In 2025, UNDP further strengthened its role as a strategic partner to the Government of North Macedonia by supporting labour market reform, private sector development, and inclusive economic growth. Through support to the Operational Plan for Active Labour Market Measures (OP 2025), key priorities such as youth employment, Roma inclusion, entrepreneurship, and green investment were embedded within national employment policies.

Private sector development remained central to this work. Support to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises focused on women, youth, Roma, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, helping businesses formalize operations, improve productivity, strengthen competitiveness, and adopt environmentally sustainable practices.

As part of the green transition, tailored energy-management training enabled businesses to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and align with emerging green market standards. Through the bizz4all.mk platform, companies also received advisory support for digital transformation, green business models, and strategic planning.





The care economy programme continued to deliver both employment and social impact. By expanding home-based care services to new municipalities, the programme created full-time jobs, particularly for women, while improving support for elderly persons and persons with disabilities. This contributed to stronger local social services and a better quality of life for vulnerable communities.

UNDP also expanded direct support for unemployed and vulnerable groups through activation measures, counselling, and skills development programmes. Particular focus was placed on increasing labour market participation among women, youth, and Roma communities.

Education reform remained a major priority. UNDP co-led the development of the Education Strategy 2026–2032, with a strong focus on adult education, vocational educa-

tion and training, and secondary education. More than 5,000 stakeholders contributed to the process, ensuring alignment with labour market needs and national reform priorities.

Technical support was also provided for the drafting of the Law on secondary education, the Law on adult education, and the Law on vocational education and training, helping create a more responsive and future-oriented education system.

A major milestone in digital governance was the full operationalization of the Learning Management System (LMS) for public administration employees. The bilingual platform now provides civil servants across the country with structured, self-paced access to mandatory training modules, strengthening professionalism, transparency, and public service delivery.



Roma empowerment



Labour Activation

Youth in the labour market





CLIMATE CHANGE, RESILIENCE BUILDING, AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Climate action in 2025 focused on practical solutions that improve people's daily lives while supporting long-term environmental sustainability.

In the Prespa region, 14,373 citizens benefited from the extension of solid waste collection services across all settlements in the Municipality of Resen. In 11 settlements where regular collection had previously been unavailable, this intervention helped address an estimated 844 tons of unmanaged household waste annually. Six illegal dumpsites were also cleaned, removing approximately 6,250 m³ of illegally disposed waste.

The modernization of the public utility company Proleter improved electronic billing, online payments, and data management for water and waste services. Employees received targeted training to ensure the sustainable operation of the upgraded system and stronger service delivery.

Farmers in Prespa received integrated support through training, mentorship, and financial assistance for equipment and mechanization, including irrigation systems, sensors, agro-photovoltaics, and planting materials. Ten agrotechnological stations were installed across 4,500 hectares of orchards, providing real-time climate and soil data to improve decision-making and crop protection.

Support to rural women also advanced sustainable tourism and local economic





development. Pilot cultivation sites were established, women received training in harvesting, packaging, branding, and marketing, and local tourism offers were strengthened through new catering concepts based on local products and non-timber forest products.

At the national level, the First Biennial Transparency Report (BTR1) for 2020–2022 was completed, and the country is expected to submit it to the UNFCCC in the first half of 2026. It also strengthens North Macedonia's compliance with the Paris Agreement and provides an evidence base for future climate policies and the preparation of NDC 3.0.

In 2025, UNDP's Green Agenda focused on turning the green transition into practical improvements that people can feel in their daily lives. Following the successful pilot programme in Skopje, where around 150 households received support for energy-efficient measures, the initiative was expanded with support from Sweden to five additional cities — Kavadarci, Kumanovo, Struga, Gostivar, and Strumica — further strengthening local efforts to reduce energy poverty and improve air quality. At the same time, cybersecurity was integrated into municipal

water systems to help secure water supply for more than 100,000 citizens.

Through the Green Financing Facility (GFF), UNDP catalyzed major climate investments by supporting renewable energy, energy efficiency, and green business transformation, resulting in renewable energy capacity expansion and strong leverage of additional private capital. At the same time, GFF continued to expand its outreach through information sessions, municipal events, and cooperation with local community actors, with a special focus on Roma communities and underserved households, ensuring that the benefits of the green transition remain inclusive and accessible to those most in need.

North Macedonia's role in global energy dialogue was also strengthened by hosting the Fourteenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, which brought together more than 1,000 participants from over 70 countries. UNDP used the forum to present the Green Finance Facility as a scalable blended-finance model for renewable energy and energy efficiency, with strong potential for further replication.



GFF Skopje



International Day of Rural Women

National Greenhouse Gas Inventory 2020-2022





STRONGER INSTITUTIONS, RESILIENT COMMUNITIES, AND SOCIAL COHESION

Governance work in 2025 focused on helping national reforms translate into practical local results. Building on the adoption of the National Development Strategy in 2024, UNDP supported implementation by helping more than 1,200 citizens and experts define 90 measures and identify 13 key projects linked to the country's long-term development trajectory. The NDS/SDG Investor Map added an important financing dimension by linking development priorities with investor opportunities.

At the local level, UNDP provided integrated support to more than 50 municipalities. This included technical documentation for infrastructure projects, grants in selected municipalities, legal and digital resources for municipal councils, and support for inter-municipal partnerships. More than 5,000 citizens took part in community forums, reinforcing participatory decision-making and civic engagement at the local level.

The Municipal Development Index (MDI) provided municipalities with an evidence-based framework to identify development gaps and investment priorities,





including governance, public services, environmental management, and social inclusion, while also integrating air quality and energy performance indicators. The Technical Documentation Fund (TDF) prepared more than 90 technical documentation packages across more than 60 municipalities, with around 60 percent of supported projects focused on air-pollution mitigation, and helped municipalities secure over USD 18 million in follow-up funding.

Youth engagement remained another strong area of focus. More than 100 young people and institutional representatives contributed to the preparation of the 2026–2028 Action Plan for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy. At the same time, regional peacebuilding activities and youth initiatives helped strengthen dialogue, cooperation, and civic participation.

Institutional resilience and rights-based governance also remained important. UNDP North Macedonia supported the Ministry of Interior through training on gender-sensitive approaches for the Crime Scene Investigation Unit and the handover of equipment to strengthen institutional capacity. In Kochani, targeted support to civil society organizations helped restore trust and support local recovery following the tragic events of early 2025.

NDS
Investor
Map



Empowering
Municipals
Councils





ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS GOVERNANCE, ECONOMY, AND CLIMATE ACTION IN 2025

In 2025, UNDP North Macedonia placed gender equality at the core of its development agenda, advancing women's empowerment across governance, economic development, climate action, and security. Key priorities included strengthening women's economic independence through access to decent work, entrepreneurship, and opportunities in the green and care economy; enhancing women's participation and leadership in local governance and environmental decision-making; and integrating gender perspectives into national and local climate and air-quality policies.

In 2025, UNDP completed a gap analysis of local gender-responsive climate actions and capacity needs, developed a Methodology for Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Actions at the local level, and carried out a gender analysis of climate policies and data to ensure gender equality was embedded in the upcoming Biennial Transparency Report. UNDP also contributed to the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2025–2027), with a focus on women's economic empowerment, climate justice, and GBV prevention, and co-supported the finalization of the eight-year National Strategy on Violence Against Women and GBV, together with work on its four-year Action Plan. Efforts to address gender-based violence were also strengthened through a new initiative with the Ministry of Interior on technology-facilitated gender-based violence, focused on improving digital forensics, survivor-centred investigations, and specialized support services.



REGIONAL COOPERATION, LOCAL IMPACT

In 2025, UNDP North Macedonia's regional engagement was woven into its broader development work, showing that cooperation across the Western Balkans can bring practical benefits to institutions, communities, and citizens alike. Through initiatives such as the ReLOaD programme, UNDP continued to help create a more enabling environment for civic participation and stronger partnerships between local governments and civil society organizations, while the EU Confidence Building project reinforced accountability, the rule of law, and a more favourable climate for reconciliation, solidarity, and sustainable peace in the region. This regional role also expanded through new partnerships, including the growing collaboration with the Austrian Development Agency under the EQUALS project in North Macedonia and Albania, which aims to strengthen free legal aid systems and improve access to justice for vulnerable groups.

At the same time, UNDP's engagement in the Prespa region connected environmental protection, sustainable agriculture, tourism, and cross-border connectivity, demonstrating how shared natural resources can also become a platform for shared development. Regional cooperation was equally reflected in support for youth peacebuilding fellowships and conferences in Ohrid, which helped strengthen a network of young leaders committed to dialogue, stability, and cooperation across the Western Balkans.





BUILDING INFRASTRU CTURE THAT IMPROVES EVERYDAY LIFE

In 2025, UNDP North Macedonia continued to invest in infrastructure not simply as construction, but as a way to improve everyday life for people and communities. From local wastewater systems to urban green spaces and cross-border infrastructure, these investments were designed to make development more visible, practical, and lasting.

Nowhere was this more visible than in the Prespa region, where infrastructure investments were closely tied to environmental protection and the well-being of local communities. In 2025, construction of the sewage network and wastewater treatment facilities in six villages in the Prespa watershed progressed as planned, and once completed, these systems are expected to directly benefit 1,550 residents in rural parts of the Prespa basin. At the same time, broader investments under the EU for Prespa initiative continued to improve communal services and reduce pressure on the lake's fragile ecosystem, showing how infrastructure can serve both people and nature at once.





Another important milestone was the continued development of the Markova Noga border crossing with Greece. Construction officially began in March 2025, marking a long-awaited step toward improving mobility, tourism, and cross-border cooperation in the Prespa region. More than a new piece of infrastructure, Markova Noga represents a practical investment in regional connectivity and new opportunities for local development.

UNDP's support to infrastructure also reached municipalities across the country through

better project preparation and greener urban investment. In 2025, new green spaces were created in several municipalities, adding more than 40,000 square metres of revitalized urban space. At the same time, the Technical Documentation Fund helped municipalities prepare more than 90 technical documentation packages for priority infrastructure projects across over 60 municipalities, many of them focused on energy efficiency, wastewater treatment, clean transport, and solid waste management.





UNDP North Macedonia

30 YEARS OF UNDP NORTH MACEDO NIA: TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE



In 2025, UNDP marked 30 years in North Macedonia with a nationwide celebration across all seven planning regions, ensuring local communities remained at the heart of the milestone. To capture this three-decade journey, a documentary and a series of posters were produced featuring beneficiaries whose lives have been influenced by UNDP's work. The anniversary culminated in a high-level event in Skopje in November 2025, reaffirming our long-term commitment to the country's progress.



LOOKING AHEAD



In 2025, it became increasingly clear that North Macedonia's development progress depends on stronger links between policy, partnership, financing, and local action. Looking ahead, UNDP will continue to support the implementation of the National Development Strategy, green finance, climate adaptation and reporting, gender equality, stronger local governance, and more inclusive public services, building on the results and partnerships advanced during the year.

An important new area of cooperation is the partnership between UNDP North Macedonia and the City of Skopje, formalized through a signed Memorandum of Understanding. This cooperation is designed to address urban challenges related to public finance, planning, environmental sustainability, mobility, and inclusive governance. Together, these steps reflect UNDP's broader commitment to working with cities as drivers of more resilient, inclusive, and future-ready development.

Development Stories



A mosaic of womanhood – Capturing diverse realities of women's experiences



From Hidden Treasure to Well-Packed Tourism Offer: Prespa, North Macedonia



Roma empowerment



The digital natives: Will they lead us to more sustainable future?



Small changes, big steps – can individual actions be solution for air pollution and climate change?



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