



Thematic
analysis/diagnosis:
Spatial planning

Executive Summary

The role of spatial planning is to promote long-term and sustainable socio-economic development, as well as to prevent its harmful impact on the environment. It is a tool for establishing a balance between the available space, the economic and demographic development, and the natural and cultural resources. The spatial plans are the highest-level strategic documents for planning and arranging space, which are obligatorily implemented during the preparation of spatial planning, urban development, project and other documentation of lower level. Spatial planning is an activity of the highest public interest.

In the preparation and implementation of spatial plans, the entire institutional infrastructure in the country has its place, plays a role and performs certain tasks. The most important stakeholders are the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Assembly, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and the Agency for Spatial Planning. The state bodies, local self-government units, organizations, institutions and legal entities responsible for certain departments that use space for certain activities also participate in the preparation of the plans. Apart from the institutions that are part of the state apparatus, for the needs of making plans, special bodies are established that have a significant role and responsibilities in the process of making and adopting the plans (Coordination bodies, municipal commissions for urbanism, participatory bodies, etc.).

The spatial plans are mainly financed from the budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, but other entities (Centers for Development of Planning Regions, Local Self-Government Units, other legal entities, as well as international donors may participate in their financing). The adoption of the Spatial plan, as the highest act for planning and arranging space of the State is regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Until 2020, spatial planning was regulated by the Law on Spatial and Urban Planning and the Law on Implementation of the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Macedonia. With the adoption of the Law on Urban Planning in 2020, which does not cover spatial planning, a legal vacuum was created and therefore it is necessary to adopt a special law regulating spatial planning as soon as possible.

The spatial plan of the Republic of North Macedonia, as the highest national strategy for spatial development, is developed by preparing and adopting:

- Spatial plans of regions;
- Spatial plans of municipalities, the municipalities in the City of Skopje and the City of Skopje, as a special self-government unit, and
- Spatial plans for areas of public interest to the State.

Taking into consideration the fact that spatial plans are interdisciplinary, complex and comprehensive strategic documents, their preparation may take a number of years. They are designed by working and synthetic teams, consultants and collaborators from the ranks of eminent experts with impeccable references from the areas involved in the development of spatial plans. The

procedure for adopting the spatial plans in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia is also long and complex, so it often happens that in the period of adopting the plan, significant changes occur in the space, which sometimes calls into question the actuality and relevance of the planning solutions.

Key stakeholders in terms of spatial planning in the process of drafting the National Development Strategy are:

- The **Government of the Republic of Northern Macedonia**, which governs the policy of spatial development,
- The **Planning regions**, as basic factors of regional development, and the second level of management and decision-making in the country,
- The **Ministries in the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia**, in charge of certain departments that are subject to strategic planning,
- **Local self-government units and the City of Skopje**,
- **Other relevant institutions** that contribute to the creation and implementation of strategic planning documents or provide an appropriate database, necessary for the preparation of the plans,
- **Scientific and education institutions**, as the representatives of the holistic approach to the planning process,
- The **Citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia**, who are the most objective and the most critical element in the planning process, the corrector of public opinion and policies, and the best indicator whether and how well the strategy has been formulated in order to meet their needs.

The role and significance of the National Development Strategy is of particular importance due to the ability to unite the most important aspects, policies, directions and provisions of the sector strategies, to review them and thus to define policies and measures that will overcome the sector inconsistencies and will offer unambiguous, clear and concrete measures and policies that will appropriately include and present the sectoral goals, policies and interests of all actors and stakeholders in the development and management of the country.

The data and information that constitute the basis of the entire planning procedure and the definition of the planning solutions, are collected from relevant and reliable sources through competent public institutions and state bodies. The methodology of data collection and processing is determined at the level of each individual institution and usually does not provide long-term and systematic monitoring and publication of data due to changes in the methodology of data collection, changes in competencies of institutions, the administrative–territorial organizations of the state, overlaps in competencies between institutions, absence of a single methodology and established indicators.

In the process of conducting consultations with the relevant stakeholders of the National Development Strategy, high-quality and significant inputs were obtained for many issues and

problems that realistically exist in our country and for which appropriate solutions can be found through the process of spatial planning.

Based on the presented expectations and the benefits from the spatial planning and spatial plans, as the highest strategic documents for arranging space, which have been expressed by the stakeholders, as well as the measures proposed for their achievement, it is possible to create a draft vision for the National Development Strategy in 2042:

Achieving sustainable and balanced spatial development, as the basis for economic prosperity, raising the quality of life for all citizens, a high degree of protection of the environment, nature and cultural values and integration into the European spatial system.

The National Development Strategy can make a significant contribution to promoting spatial planning as a process, science and practice.

To that end, two sets of recommendations have been provided in this thematic analysis:

- For the process of preparation of spatial plans, and
- For the process of implementing the spatial plans.