

Introduction and Background

Macedonia2025 is a non-profit, non-political organization with primary focus on economic and leadership development, working in partnership with business, government and academia to generate opportunities and build capacities for economic growth, therefore helping build a stronger nation.

Main Strategic Objectives

“Think” (provide independent perspectives, foster discussion, incite calls to action) and “Do” (execute programs, convene key stakeholders, impact policy) in five major areas:

1. Accelerate economic development (Attract Foreign Investment; Support competitiveness of Macedonian companies and stimulate export development; Support the growth of entrepreneurs and start-up companies);
2. Implement education programs that accelerate leadership development and inspire and improve entrepreneurship in Macedonia;
3. Provide the Diaspora an opportunity to strengthen and improve linkages worldwide;
4. Advocate the ideals of transparent, democratic and inclusive society – good for the citizens, good for economic development and good for the country;
5. Maintain and help facilitate discussions on a ‘Country Dashboard’, to ensure broad progress on growth and quality of life is being made and headed in right direction.

Core Values

- We envision programs, advocacy and research facilitating creation of an advanced knowledge and transformation of Macedonia into a vibrant economy
- We energize the Macedonian citizens, businesses, academia and Diaspora through collaboration, networking and social engagements
- We evolve the leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial capacities of the Macedonian leaders of tomorrow globally through talent development programs
- We excel in efficient execution of all programs and maximum leverage of our donors’ support
- We promote ethical approach to business as a fundamental pillar of a healthy and prosperous society

Board of Directors, Staff, and Membership Bodies

The management structure of Macedonia2025 is composed of a Board of Directors (currently 15 directors) and led by Chairperson. The Board of Directors includes a dynamic membership base, made up of exceptionally successful business leaders and innovators of Macedonian origin. The Chief Executive Officer(CEO) leads day-to-day operations and strategic planning. The CEO, Dr. Nikica Mojsoska Blazhevski, heads a team of highly skilled professionals who specialize in economic policy, business finance, Western Balkan political economy, and corporate communications. The Macedonia2025 team is dedicated to building a better future for Macedonia.

The organization activities and programs are also supported by two additional distinct bodies: The Council of Experts and the Ambassadors’ Club. Council of Experts is an advisory body consisting of world-leading experts that collaborate with Macedonia2025 to help make Macedonia’s economy, society, and quality of life stronger. Furthermore, an auxiliary support network called the Ambassadors Club supports Macedonia2025. As a network of exceptional individuals, the Ambassadors join their efforts to assist in the implementation of Macedonia2025’s projects and events, adding value to the networking opportunities within the organization, as well as contributing to the expansion of the Macedonian market and fundraising opportunities.

Vision and Mission

Our Vision

International, independent, nonpartisan, non-profit “think & do” tank founded in 2007 by Macedonian expatriates who envision a proactive way of contributing to the economic and democratic development of Macedonia. With headquarters in Skopje and supporters around the globe, we encompass a wide array of programs that enable expatriates to give back to their homeland.

Our Mission

We are dedicated to helping create a prosperous economic climate and a “stronger nation” that will improve opportunities for citizens, companies, and foreign investors. We promote sustainable economic growth through fostering competitiveness, entrepreneurship, innovation and value-based leadership.

Strategic Objectives

We accomplish our mission by implementing programs and activities in five strategic objectives. Each year we develop and design our programs in consultation with the business community in Macedonia, our expatriates around the globe, the international economic and diplomatic institutions, as well as our own research, insights and observations. Below we present our objectives, as well as the major programs and activities that we implemented within each objective in 2019.

Objective 1: Accelerate Economic Development

We are dedicated to attracting foreign investment, supporting the competitiveness of Macedonian companies and stimulating export development. We work on supporting the steady development of entrepreneurs and startup companies, helping them grow and concur foreign markets.

This objective will be achieved through the following programs:

1.1. The Bitove Family Entrepreneurship Program: Supporting the growth of Entrepreneurs (CESO)

Macedonia2025 in cooperation with the Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO SACO) offers its services to Macedonian micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). We are thankful to the Bitove family for financing this program.

CESO SACO is a leading non-profit economic development organization with nearly 50 years of experience, dedicated to sustainably reducing poverty and fostering economic growth in Canada and globally. CESO SACO provides senior Volunteer Advisers, with experience in diverse sectors and industries to assist small entrepreneurs/MSMEs in improving their business operations by providing skills development, training, coaching, mentoring and related best practices, business tools, processes and systems. Macedonia2025 covers the Advisors’ fee and transport to Macedonia. It is up to the selected company to cover the Advisors’ accommodation, meals and local transport.

In 2020, Macedonia 2025 will support **7 companies** from Macedonia to receive expertise from the CESO advisors.

In 2020 we will also work on improving the assessment of the program in terms of its contribution to the growth of participating companies.

1.2. Macedonia2025 Summit

The Macedonia2025 Summit is a dynamic platform for sharing knowledge, connecting business and inspiring innovation and change in Southeast Europe. We stay committed to organizing the 9th edition of the Summit in 2020. We are again committing ourselves to organizing an excellent event, with distinguished speakers, discussing the most pressing and relevant topics for the country and the region, as well as brining in many of our diaspora professionals. In addition, following the great success of 2019, we will again devote much attention to the B2B meetings and networking during the Summit.

1.3. Pilot Program: Mentoring Program for Startups – Upscale

The Mentoring program for Startups, Upscale, will provide a mentoring opportunity to **seven startups** that were selected at the pitching event at the Macedonia2025 Summit 2019. The aims and objectives have been established to match startups with mentors from our Board of Directors and/or professionals from the Macedonian diaspora. The mentorship program will last 6 months, with a potential introduction of the startups to investors/partners.

1.4. Pilot Program: SME market expansion – LiftSME

LiftSME is a training program for SMEs with an 8-month delivery period. With this program, Macedonia2025 will support SMEs to enter the US market. **Ten companies** were pre-selected at the Macedonia2025 Summit, of which eight will need additional support to expand in the US market.

Initial meetings with all companies have been completed at the beginning of 2020.

Objective 2: Implement education programs that accelerate leadership development, inspire and improve entrepreneurship in Macedonia

2.1.Zafirovski Executive Education Program (Kellogg)

The Zafirovski Executive Education Program of Macedonia2025 in partnership with the Kellogg School of Management (KSM) provides scholarships for Macedonian business leaders to the globally renowned Kellogg Executive Development Program. The program aim is to enhance the competencies and performance of Macedonian business leaders and contribute to the further development of the Macedonian economy and workforce.

The program consists of three weeks at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University and additional opportunities for: mentoring, networking and experiential learning. Zafirovski Executive Education Program is offering scholarships for the following two programs:

- Executive Development Program (EDP)
- Enterprise Leadership Program (ELP)

The alumni of the program are to be engaged by holding at least one Alumni event. Kellogg alumni, together with a Macedonia2025 team member responsible for education programs, will hold interviews for the prospective participants. Furthermore, Macedonia2025 has made possible for interested parties to meet informally with Kellogg Alumni members by launching the event ‘Ask a Kellogg Alumni’. These meetings can take place in person, or online - through a platform attached to our website.

In 2020, **6 scholarships** (4 EDP and 2 ELP) will be awarded to applicants.

2.2. Schulich - The Executive Study Program

The program is implemented in cooperation with the Schulich Executive Education Centre (SEEC) at York University in Toronto, Canada. SEEC provides an education that is focused, practical and immediately applicable. They share a common interest in providing and delivering executive education to professionals from Macedonia.

This program is designed to provide Macedonian talented executives with a complete North American experience through access to some of the best executive education programs and some genuine business experience in North American companies. It will increase the participant’s competencies and performance in a continuously changing global business environment. It also offers a unique networking opportunity that can help export-oriented companies promote their products and services to the global markets.

Schulich has an internationally diverse faculty and student body. The faculty is drawn exclusively from both practitioners and academia, and each is an acknowledged leader and innovator in their field. Executive development at Schulich is all about this kind of “just in time” learning, focused, practical and immediately applicable to the task at hand.

In 2020, Macedonia 2025 will grant **4 scholarships**.

2.3. LEADER Project

The LEADER Project is a student-driven overseas economic development program. It was founded in 1991 by MBA students from the Ivey Business School with the mandate of empowering promising entrepreneurs in frontier markets to envision, launch, and/or scale new ventures. Through this approach LEADER aims to enable high-potential individuals to develop local business solutions that create opportunities for their communities. Each year, LEADER sends a team of Ivey students to a number of sites, where they teach foundational business administration and entrepreneurial skills. Since its inception, LEADER has provided thousands of promising business people with the analytical tools and decision-making skills to improve local economic conditions.

30+ participants will take part in the LEADER project in 2020. A networking event will be organized, and Macedonia2025 will seek an option for financial awards for the winners of the program.

2.4. Support Fund for Talented Students

The aim of the program is to actively and continuously support talented young people in the country to realize their full personal and professional potential. In this way, Macedonia2025 actively contributes to a more inclusive society and realizes its mission – supporting the economic development of the country and improving the living standard of the citizens.

The Support Fund for Talented Students “Talents Today – Leaders Tomorrow” provides financial means to help talented youth. These scholarships provide the selected ten students with the opportunity for continuous talent and skills development through mentoring, participation in international competitions, trainings, and internships in prominent companies.

This year, scholarships will be awarded to **10 individuals**, where the financial support for each candidate amounts to 60,000 MKD. The scholarships are provided through donations and cooperation with Macedonia 2025’s corporate and individual partners.

2.5. High School Students Competition for Best Business Concept

Macedonia2025, the Business Startup Centre at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University), the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), and the National Center for Development of Innovation and Entrepreneurial Learning (NCDIEL) organized a High School Students Competition titled ‘Best Business Concept’ for all state high school and vocational school students, for the first time in 2019. The finale of the competition took place at the Macedonia2025 Summit 2019. This competition strives to support and promote entrepreneurship among youth, by presenting the winners with financial awards.

In 2020, the High School Students Competition for Best Business Concept will collaborate with Center for Business Development (Faculty of Mechanical Engineering), and the final competition will take place at the Macedonia2025 Summit 2020.

Objective 3: Provide the Diaspora an opportunity to strengthen and improve linkages worldwide

3.1. Council of Experts

The Council of Experts is comprised of world-leading experts who partner with Macedonia2025 to help make Macedonia’s economy, society, and quality of life stronger, both now and in the future. Members of the Council of Experts provide expert guidance, recommendations, analysis, quality assurance, access to funding and research for Macedonia2025. The Council of Experts is a prestigious group. Members are leading experts in their field or sector of business. They have qualifications from world-renowned institutions or have business experience with leading or pioneering companies.

In 2020, Macedonia2025 strives to expand its network of Council of Experts and increase engagement with the members of the council.

3.2. Ambassadors Club

Macedonia2025’s Ambassadors Club is a group of successful professionals of Macedonian origin from around the world. As a network of exceptional individuals, the Ambassadors join their efforts to assist in the implementation of Macedonia2025’s projects and events, adding value to the networking opportunities within the organization, as well as contributing to the expansion of the Macedonian market and fundraising opportunities. The Ambassadors’ potential contribution is shaped by their physical location and expertise, varying from year to year.

In 2020, Macedonia2025 will grow the pool of Ambassadors Club Members by more than 25%, and organize at least one event led by the members of the club. Furthermore, the AC Members will be more involved in the Summit 2020, by organizing workshops in their own fields.

Ambassadors Club Members will have meetings on a quarterly basis.

3.3. Expansion of diaspora network

In 2020, Macedonia2025 will strive to increase its diaspora network on social media, and unite them in the goal of helping Macedonian businesses/individuals. The Macedonian professional diaspora members that share our mission and vision will have a chance to partner with our organization in order to strengthen the Macedonian economy.

3.4. Online platform for connecting businesses with diaspora

One of Macedonia2025’s main goals is to connect professional diaspora around the globe to support the economic growth of Macedonia. Our organization tirelessly works on increasing its diaspora engagement by establishing a growing body of supporters and friends among Macedonian expatriates. Renowned members of the Macedonian Diaspora, Members of the Council of Experts, and Ambassadors Club Members, will join the online platform as experts that will support Macedonian businesses and individuals through mentorship and finding partners and/or investors abroad.

The online platform will go live in summer 2020.

3.5. Proposed Activity: Charity Event in Toronto

A charity event is planned to take place in June, 2020. At the event, funds will be gathered to support the Executive Study Program, Schulich for two years. Furthermore, with this event, Macedonia2025 is hoping to raise brand awareness and invite all attendees to join the online platform as experts, in order to support Macedonian businesses and individuals.

Objective 4: Advocate the ideals of transparent, democratic and inclusive society – good for the citizens, good for economic development, and good for the country

4.1. Quarterly Economic Report

The Quarterly Economic Report gives updates on economic developments based on the available early warning indicators and high frequency data.

The report will continue to monitor the economic developments on a quarterly basis throughout 2020.

4.2. Policy Contributions

In 2020, the Macedonia2025 team will publish four articles on relevant issues, as well as four position papers for policy reforms. These works will be done in collaboration with our Council of Experts. The topics of choice will be also related to the Summit 2020 agenda. Some of the topics include analysis of the impact of FDIs on the Macedonian economy, PISA results of the Macedonian students, etc.

4.3. O2 Challenge 2 – Managing Climate Change

Public opinion research conducted by the United Nations Development Program, UNDP and the Ministry of the Environment shows that Macedonian citizens see climate change as the third most serious threat to society, but they do not yet have enough knowledge of climate change adaptation. The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning creates climate change policies based on greenhouse gas emissions, assesses the potential for their mitigation or “climate change mitigation” and analyzes and measures future climate change scenarios.

Given that climate change is a global problem, there is a need for additional effort and attention to promote adaptation of best practices and to support the development of concrete measures to overcome the problem through innovative ideas and actions that will stimulate resolution to the problem. To this end, the Fund for Innovation and Technological Development organizes the second “O2 CHALLENGE 2”, and Macedonia 2025 will partner with the Fund as to provide mentorship and support to the applicants in improving their projects. In particular, applicants will have the opportunity to receive an assistance from a mentor which is experienced business professional in the country (from our Kellogg Alumni Club) and work with the mentor to improve their business plans. The Mentoring Event “Climate Change and Clean Air” will be organized as a cooperation between Macedonia 2025 and the Israeli Embassy to the Republic of Macedonia.

Objective 5: Help facilitate and maintain discussions on a ‘Country Dashboard’, to ensure broad progress on growth and quality of life is being made and headed in the right direction

5.1. Country Dashboard: Measuring Economic Growth

The Country Dashboard consists of fourteen measures/indicators. Seven track economic metrics, while the remaining seven measure the most important (in our view) drivers for growth – ‘Growth Enablers’. The Dashboard provides a streamlined view of the economic conditions and progress made over time in Macedonia, placed in comparative context with the region and with historic baseline data. The comparative data is drawn from a selection of 34 countries. These 34 data points are selected as a country peer group, based upon several indicators, including their status as upper middle-income countries, according to the World Bank. Furthermore, the peer group was selected based upon the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) suggested peer group for Macedonia. Thus, the Country Dashboard also provides a ranking of the country within the 34 countries and tracks progress in relative terms.

In 2020, Macedonia2025 will update the dashboard on a quarterly basis to reflect only the most current forecasting and economic indicators. Furthermore, Macedonia2025 is committing to a review of the Dashboard (both indicators and the peer countries) as to make it a more precise and useful tool for all interested parties, in tracking the progress of the country towards a “stronger nation”.

6. Macedonia2025 Projects

6.1. 21st Century Schools Programme

Macedonia2025 is partnering with the British Council and London School of Economics (LSE) in implementation of the project titled ‘21st Century Schools Programme’. The British Council is the main partner in this project, which aims to equip students aged 10-15 years across the Western Balkan region with critical thinking, problem solving, and ICT skills. Apart from learning critical thinking and problem solving, children learn practical programming and have the opportunity to practice their skills through physical computing. To compete in the global job market, skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, digital literacy and creativity are key to success. As part of the program, each school in the Western Balkans is provided with a number of micro:bit devices – pocket sized computers which children can programme onto and use across subjects to solve every day problems. It allows students to learn in a fun, interactive and innovative way.

The three-year education programme is designed and implemented by the British Council and funded by the UK Government. Macedonia2025, together with LSE, is responsible for the evaluation of the impact of this Programme, regarding the improvement of the learning process and the skills of young people. For that purpose, we are providing a baseline and ex-post analysis/report through conducting in-depth-interviews and questionnaires with the relevant stakeholders, i.e. policy makers, school leaders, teachers and pupils. Macedonia2025 successfully completed the first part of the evaluation, and it will continue to evaluate the British Council’s ‘21 Century Schools Programme’ until 2021, when all primary schools in the country have successfully implemented the Programme into the teaching practices.

6.2. Barriers for access to finance for SMEs

In 2020, Macedonia2025 will undertake a project titled “Barriers for access to finance for SMEs”. The aim of the project is to develop an analysis and to propose policy interventions in order to mitigate the obstacles of SMEs in Macedonia in getting the needed finance. The project will consist of three elements: i) background analysis, based on available official information (statistical information and reports by renewed international organizations) on the barriers for access to finance for SMEs in Macedonia; ii) conducting a survey to collect primary data on the barriers that companies face when trying to find financing and iii) preparation of a road map for policymakers for mitigating the obstacles for accessing financing.

These are the Projects which we already received form international donors. In 2020, we commit ourselves to continue applying for new programs and projects.