



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

MACEDONIA

5 JANUARY 2009

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Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information Key Documents (COI Key Documents) on Macedonia has been produced by COI Service, UK Border Agency (UKBA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 15 December 2008. It was issued on 5 January 2009.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any UKBA opinion or policy.
- iii For UK Border Agency users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Macedonia is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to COI Service as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

UK Border Agency

Apollo House
36 Wellesley Road
Croydon CR9 3RR
United Kingdom

Email: cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

- xi The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) was established in 2003 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the UKBA's country of origin information material. The APCI reviewed a number of UKBA's reports and published its findings on its website at www.apci.org.uk. Since October 2008, the work of the APCI has been taken forward by the Chief Inspector of UKBA.

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2. Background information about Macedonia

Full Country Name: Republic of Macedonia (constitutional name) aka Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Population: 2, 071,210 (July 2004 est)

Capital City: Skopje

People: (2002 Census) Macedonian 64%, Albanian 25%, Turkish 4%, Roma 3%, Serb 2%, Bosniaks 0.5%, Vlachs 0.5%, Others 1%

Languages: Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Vlach, and Roma

Religion(s): Orthodox 67%, Muslim 30%

Currency: Macedonian Denar

Major Political Parties: Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation - Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), Democratic Party for Integration (DUI), Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), New Social Democratic Party (NSDP), Liberal Party (LP), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Socialist Party of Macedonia (SP), Party for European Future (PEI).

Government: Parliamentary Democracy

Head of State: President Branko Crvenkovski

Prime Minister/Premier: Mr Nikola Gruevski

Foreign Minister: Mr Antonio Milosevski

(Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile, last updated 5 November 2008)
[4a]

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GEOGRAPHY

The FCO Country Profile, updated 5 November 2008, noted that Macedonia is "Bordered by Serbia including Kosovo to the north, Bulgaria to the east, Greece to the south and Albania to the west. It is a land-locked mountain territory with deep valleys and basins, and has three large natural lakes. The river Vardar bisects the country."
[4a]

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MAPS

Map of Macedonia, United Nation (UN) accessed 3 November 2008 [19a]



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Map of Macedonia, World Atlas, accessed 3 November 2008
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RECENT HISTORY

The FCO Country Profile, updated 5 November 2008, recorded

“On 9 September 1991, Macedonians overwhelmingly voted in favour of independence from Yugoslavia. This led to the adoption on 20 November 1991 of a new constitution, which proclaimed the 'Republic of Macedonia' as a sovereign and independent state. In March 1992 the peaceful withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from its territory was successfully negotiated. Macedonia was the only country to accede from the Yugoslav

federation peacefully.” [4a]

The same FCO report also noted that “Stability in Macedonia was seriously affected by the Kosovo crisis in 1999, during which the country received around 300,000 refugees. Albanians form the principal minority, comprising 25% of the population according to the census of 2002, the results of which were announced on 1 December 2003. They live mainly in the west of the country, neighbouring Albania and Kosovo. Violence between ethnic Albanian insurgents and the security forces broke out in February 2001, starting with a number of isolated incidents between the ‘National Liberation Army’ (NLA) and the Macedonian police in the area of Tanusevci, near the Kosovo border. Macedonian forces were able to establish tentative control of the area towards the end of March [2001]. [4a]

The FCO 2008 report further added that;

“Fighting was interrupted in June [2001] when NATO negotiated a cease-fire between the two sides. The cease-fire more or less held whilst peace talks continued between the ethnic Albanian and Macedonian political leaders and the late President Trajkovski. These talks, facilitated by the European Union, NATO, the US and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), produced a settlement based around a Framework Agreement. In broad terms, the Agreement called for an end to the conflict by disarming the NLA, offering them an amnesty, and initiating a reform process to address ethnic Albanian aspirations. It was formally signed in Ohrid on 13 August. In late August, as called for in the Framework Agreement, NATO deployed a Task Force ‘Essential Harvest’, comprising over 3000 troops, to collect weapons volunteered by the NLA. The mission was successful and during September and early October, the level of violence in the country greatly reduced whilst the political process concentrated efforts on implementing the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

“On 8 March 2002, the Macedonian Parliament passed an Amnesty Law, providing amnesty to those involved in the conflict. In the summer of 2004, a package of laws on decentralisation was passed. A referendum to go back to the 1996 laws was called and held on 7 November. The referendum failed due to low voter turnout (26% turnout against a required 50% plus one quorum). On 15 July 2005, the Macedonian Parliament passed legislation covering the display of national flags and symbols. This completed the legislative agenda of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.” [4a]

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POLITICS

Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy. Parliamentary elections are held every four years, when the Prime Minister is elected. The President of Macedonia is elected for a five-year term. Both are elected by the people. But they can be from different parties. Macedonia held its first multi-party elections in October 1990 when it was still part of Yugoslavia.

Presidential elections were brought forward from the autumn to April 2004 due to the death of President Trajkovski in a plane crash on 26 February 2004. The fourth Parliamentary elections were held on 5 July 2006. The OSCE declared that the elections had generally met international standards despite isolated incidents during the election campaign and isolated irregularities on polling day itself. The official

turnout on the Election Day itself was 56%. After a revote in some polling stations on 19 July 2006, the State Election Commission announced that the VMRO-DPMNE led coalition held 45 parliamentary seats (44 before the revote). DUI-PDP coalition – 17 (18 before the revote), SDSM led coalition – 32, DPA – 11, NSDP – 7, VMRO-National – 6 DOM N.D. PEI – 1. (FCO Country Profile, last updated 5 November 2008). [4a]

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RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

“The fifth Parliamentary elections were held on 1 June 2008. These early elections were proposed by the Democratic Union for Integration after Greece vetoed Macedonia's bid to join NATO at the 2008 Bucharest summit due to their dispute over the ‘name issue’. The request was supported by the ruling coalition of VMRO–DPMNE and the Democratic Party of Albanians. This is the first time since independence in 1991 that Macedonia has held parliamentary elections early.

“During the election period there were numerous security-related incidents, mainly reflecting rivalries between the two main ethnic Albanian parties, DUI and DPA. On the Election Day itself, the OSCE assessed that the key international standards were not met, as organised attempts to violently disrupt the electoral process in parts of the ethnic Albanian areas made it impossible for voters in many places to freely express their will. The next round of Presidential elections is scheduled for spring 2009.” (FCO Country Profile, last updated 5 November 2008). [4a]

See Section on [Elections](#)

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ECONOMY

GDP: € 5.545 bn (2007) GDP per head: € 7280 (2007) PPP(purchasing power parity).

Annual Growth: GDP Growth 5.1% (2007 - State statistical office)

Inflation: 2.3% (2007 - State statistical office)

(FCO Country Profile, last updated 5 November 2008) [4a]

After gaining independence in 1991, Macedonia faced a number of obstacles to economic growth. These included the 1992-2000 UN economic sanctions on Serbia, 1993-6 Greek trade embargo, 1999 Kosovo refugee crisis and the 2001 internal crisis. The economy finally started to pick up in 2004, maintaining macro-economic stability and modest growth in 2005/6.

The new government elected in 2006 and re-elected in 2008 puts the economy, with emphasis on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and enhancing the business climate, as the cornerstone of its work plan. A number of reforms, primarily tax and business reform have reduced the grey economy and stimulated economic growth. GDP grew to 5.1% in 2007 and is continuing the same trend in 2008, which is the highest since the independence.

However, the macroeconomic stability worsened in 2008, with record increase of the trade and current account deficit and reduced foreign reserves, partly as a result of a global rise in prices and the credit crunch. Inflation rose to 10% in the first 6 months.

The overall macroeconomic situation also poses a threat to stability of the Macedonian Denar, which, pegged to the Euro, has been stable for years. (FCO Country Profile, last updated 5 November 2008) [4a]

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3. Human Rights

OVERVIEW

The United States Department of State 2007 Country Report on Human rights practices in Macedonia published 11 March 2008 (USSD Report 2007) stated that:

“The Republic of Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy with a population of approximately 2.1 million. The president, who is popularly elected, is head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces... The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Police abuse of suspects continued to be a problem, and there were allegations of police harassment of ethnic minorities; however, authorities took measures to strengthen oversight of police. Corruption in the interior and justice ministries, and political pressure exerted on them, the courts, and the public prosecutor's office impeded the investigation and prosecution of some allegations of human rights abuse. Trafficking in persons continued to be a problem, although increased government attention contributed to an apparent decline in some forms of trafficking during the year. Societal discrimination against ethnic minorities, particularly Roma, continued to be a problem; however, tensions between the ethnic Macedonian and Albanian populations continued to decrease.” [2a]

The FCO country profile, updated 5 November 2008 noted that

“To strengthen reforms in the security and justice sector and promote human rights... monitoring suggests that more progress is needed. Even where legislation and institutions exist, effective implementation can be hampered by poor communication and lack of trust. Joined-up working can have a transforming effect in safeguarding human rights, reducing corruption, increasing efficiency and winning public and investor confidence. Aspects of human rights and minority rights can be particularly challenging.” [4a]

The EU 2008 Progress report on Macedonia published 5 November 2008 noted

“Little progress can be reported as regards promotion and enforcement of human rights. The inter-ministerial body for protection of human rights met four times and adopted its rules of procedure. However, it is not yet effective in coordinating the action of ministries and bodies concerned. It needs to provide stronger leadership to raise the levels of respect for fundamental rights throughout the country. In particular, training of public servants in all relevant areas needs to be intensified. With regard to the prevention of torture and ill-treatment and fight against impunity, the Ministry of the Interior has dealt with 52 cases of ill-treatment and no cases of illegal arrest. This was a decrease in the number of cases compared with previous years. Criminal charges were brought against 27 police officers involved. The Ministry of the Interior made further progress in implementing the code of police ethics by carrying out a programme of training.” [6a] (p15-16)

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POLICE ABUSE

The USSD Report 2007 stated:

“The national police are a centralized force, subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior, consisting of uniformed police, criminal (civilian) police, and border police...Police impunity remained a problem, although there were improvements. More aggressive

internal investigations, coupled with the work of the office of the ombudsman, substantially reduced impunity.

“The PSU conducts all internal affairs investigations and allegations of police misconduct. Unit officials were slow to complete investigations and bring charges in outstanding human rights cases from previous years. Nevertheless, international observers noted continued improvements in the Interior Ministry's response to new cases of individual police misconduct and more frequent and consistent disciplining of officers found guilty.

“The PSU recommended disciplinary action against officers in 175 cases. The Interior Ministry punished employees by reductions in pay (in 81 cases against 145 employees), suspension from the police force (in 40 cases against 84 employees), and reassignment (in 18 cases against 43 employees), for a total of 139 cases. The PSU forwarded 87 cases of alleged police abuse to the prosecutor during the year with a recommendation for criminal prosecution. The prosecutor accepted charges in 82 of the cases. During the year 30 police officers and 19 border police officers were convicted of bribery and misuse of official position.” [2a]

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PRISON CONDITIONS

The USSD 2007 report on Macedonia stated that “Prison conditions barely met international standards. The government permitted visits by independent human rights observers. Significant problems noted by international observers were poor hygienic conditions and medical care, inadequate state funding, and overcrowding, including at the Skopje detention center [sic]. In the pre-trial detention facility in Skopje, juveniles and adults shared the same common spaces.” [2a]

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) in report published on 10 September 2008 based on a visit to Macedonia from 14 to 18 October 2007 noted

“In the report on the May 2006 periodic visit to ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’, which was transmitted to the national authorities in November 2006, the CPT expressed its serious concern about the fact that the Committee was obliged to reiterate many of its recommendations, some of which were of very long standing. Moreover, the CPT highlighted that certain fundamental structural issues were undermining attempts to provide appropriate conditions of detention and treatment for persons deprived of their liberty. For example, in relation to prisons, it pointed to a lack of policy on how to manage complex institutions, an inadequate system of reporting and supervision, and the poor management and performance of staff. In this context, the CPT stated that it would be scrutinising the action taken as regards combating impunity, the conditions of detention in prisons and the treatment and care of particularly vulnerable persons.

“It is therefore regrettable that the response furnished by the Government of ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ to the report on the 2006 visit did not address many of the concerns identified by the Committee. This is particularly the case as regards the response to those sections of the report dealing with prison-related issues.” [33a]

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VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The USSD Report 2007 stated that:

“Domestic and other violence against women was a persistent and common problem; a survey conducted in 2006 by a local NGO specializing in the problems of family violence, found that 56 percent of women claimed to have been victims of psychological domestic violence, and 18 percent of women claimed to have been victims of physical domestic violence.

“Cultural norms, including victims' concern over possible shame to the family, discouraged the reporting of violence against women, and victims of domestic violence rarely filed criminal charges. Although the law specifically criminalizes domestic violence and prescribes substantial punishments for violators, the law was rarely applied in practice. While the law provides for civil restraining orders to protect potential victims, there were reports that police officers were unaware of provisions of the law that allowed them to act to protect victims of family violence. Police often did not respond to allegations of domestic violence. The government did not require domestic violence training for police, prosecutors, or judges; however, international organizations provided such training to a number of law enforcement officials.” (USSD 2007, 11 March 2008, section 5) [2a]

The USSD Report 2007 further stated that:

“Sexual harassment of women in the workplace was a problem, particularly in the private sector. Although the law does not specifically address sexual harassment, it could be prosecuted as a criminal act under antidiscrimination legislation; however, this did not occur in practice...Women from certain parts of the ethnic Albanian and Romani communities did not have equal opportunities for employment and education due to traditional or religious restrictions on their schooling and participation in society. In some ethnic Albanian communities, women were disenfranchised by the practice of men voting on behalf of female family members.

“The Office of Gender Equality in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was responsible for ensuring the legal rights of women. The Law on Equality, implemented in May 2006, established gender commissions at the municipal council level. During the year a gender equality commission established by the parliament began revising laws to promote equal protection for all genders. Although the law requires men and women to be paid equally for equivalent work, wage discrimination against women remained pervasive, particularly in the private sector. While the law prohibits dismissal of women on maternity leave, discrimination against pregnant women continued in practice.” [2a] (Section 5)

The EU 2008 Progress report on Macedonia published 5 November 2008 noted that “As regards women’s rights, equal opportunity committees have been established in 79 municipalities out of 85. Implementation of the 2007 national action plan for gender equality is progressing... In the Parliament a record 38 out of 120 members are women. A national strategy against domestic violence was adopted in April 2008. Amendments to the law on the family provided clearer definition of family violence. The definition of rape in criminal law was widened thus affording more protection to women.” [6a]

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CHILD ABUSE

The USSD Report 2007 stated that:

“Child abuse was a problem in some areas. During the year, according to interior ministry statistics, 86 cases of sexual abuse against children were reported, of which 53 cases involved sexual assault, 13 were cases of rape, five involved satisfying sexual urges in front of others, two involved showing pornography to minors, and one case of incest with a minor. The Centre for Social Work of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Department for Juvenile Delinquency of the Ministry of the Interior were responsible for addressing child abuse. NGOs were also active in this area.

“Child marriage occurred with some frequency in the Romani community and less frequently in the ethnic Albanian community. It was difficult to estimate the extent of underage marriage in the Romani community because such marriages frequently were not registered. A survey of 960 Romani women in 2005 by a local NGO found that 54 percent had given birth to their first child by the age of 18, while 3 percent had given birth between the ages of 12 and 14. Romani adults often organized their children into groups to beg for money at busy intersections, on street corners, and in restaurants and cafes.

“According to some estimates, there were between 500 and 1,000 street children in the country; most of them were Roma. With international support, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy operated a day centre for street children.” [2a]

The EU 2008 Progress report on Macedonia published 5 November 2008 noted that:

“As regards children's rights, compulsory education was extended by law from 8 to 9 years. A health programme to target the poorest communities is ongoing and childcare services are improving. The amendments to the Criminal Code adopted in January 2008 strengthened provisions to protect children from crimes such as child pornography, sexual abuse and trafficking of juveniles. Implementation of the 2006 action plan for the protection of children's rights has been slow. 17% of children are not covered by the public health insurance, scheme, 90% of children do not attend pre-school and 37% do not attend secondary school... Juvenile delinquency is very high whilst the law on juvenile justice has not yet entered into force.” [6a]

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TRAFFICKING

The law prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons; however, there were reports that persons were trafficked to, through, within, and from the country. Although Macedonia remained primarily a country of transit for trafficking, officials and other observers acknowledged that the number of individuals trafficked within the country was increasing... According to a government study, most internally trafficked victims were ethnic Macedonians from poor, dysfunctional families in the eastern part of the country, who were trafficked to bars and nightclubs in the western part. A smaller number of Roma and Albanian women were also trafficked and sexually exploited. (USSD Report 2007, 11 March 2008) [2a]

The USSD Trafficking in Persons Report 2008, released on 4 June 2008, section on Macedonia, noted that:

“Macedonia is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation... The Government of Macedonia fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government made marked progress during the last year: it improved its capacity to identify and protect victims, resulting in a greatly increased number of victims identified and significantly more victims offered and provided assistance. The government’s aggressive prosecution efforts resulted in an increased number of traffickers convicted.

“The Government of Macedonia increased its law enforcement efforts in 2007. The government prohibits sex and labour trafficking through its 2004 criminal code: article 418 on all forms of trafficking in persons; article 418c on organising a group for trafficking; and article 191 covering forced prostitution. Penalties prescribed for trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation are commensurate with those for rape. In January 2008, the government amended its criminal code, adding harsher penalties for those who traffic or attempt to traffic minors and for those who use the services of trafficked victims.

“The Government of Macedonia considerably increased its efforts to identify trafficking victims and identified 249 victims—152 foreign nationals and 97 Macedonian in 2007—compared to 17 in 2006. The government offered assistance including shelter, legal and medical assistance, witness protection, psychological assistance, and vocational training to all potential victims in 2007. However, according to data provided by NGOs, IOM, and government agencies assisting victims, less than one-third of identified potential victims accepted this assistance and protection.” [2d]

ETHNIC GROUPS

The USSD Report 2007 observed that “Societal discrimination against ethnic minorities, particularly Roma, continued to be a problem; however, tensions between the ethnic Macedonian and Albanian populations continued to decrease... (Introduction) The OSCE-led international community efforts to engage the government on human rights issues, and OSCE and EU monitoring missions continued to implement projects to improve relations between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians.” [2a] (Section 4)

The same report added that:

“There were reports of police violence against Roma and Albanians, including beatings during arrest and while in detention. The most widely noted incident involved the “Mountain Storm” police operation in the village of Brodec, which involved a number of arrests of suspected gang members. Brodec inhabitants claimed that those arrested were innocent and victims of ethnic discrimination. The ombudsman’s office and the Macedonian Helsinki Committee indicated that the police had used excessive force during their arrests. In December ICRC representatives were allowed to visit the Brodec detainees. ICRC’s report had not been published by year’s end.

“Relations between the ethnic Macedonian majority and the ethnic Albanian minority continued to be strained. However, there were some signs of continuing improvement, especially in restoring confidence between the communities. Reports of disputes in schools between parents and school authorities over ethnic issues decreased for the third consecutive year. Students from different ethnic groups sometimes studied in

separate shifts or separate facilities, either due to use of different languages of instruction or at their parents' request." [2a] (Section 5)

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4. Index to key source documents

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KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	<p>[1a]</p> <p>[2a]</p> <p>[4a]</p> <p>[4b]</p> <p>[5a]</p> <p>[7a]</p> <p>[7b]</p> <p>[10a]</p> <p>[17a]</p>	<p>Europa World Online Country Profile Macedonia, Location, Climate, Language, Religion, Flag, Capital (accessed 16 October 2008) http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</p> <p>United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2007, Macedonia, published 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100571.htm</p> <p>Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Macedonia, updated 27 October 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/europe/macedonia?profile=all</p> <p>Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights Annual Report 2007 Macedonia, published March 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/human-rights-report-2007</p> <p>Human Rights Watch World Report 2005, Macedonia http://www.hrw.org/wr2k5/wr2005.pdf</p> <p>BBC News, Country Profile: Macedonia, Last updated 10 July 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1067125.stm</p> <p>BBC News, Timeline: Macedonia, published 30 June 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1410364.stm</p> <p>Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, Macedonia last updated 6 November 2008 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mk.html</p> <p>Ethnologue, Languages of the World, Languages of Macedonia– 2008 http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=MK</p>
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	[25a]	Freedom in the World 2008: Macedonia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2008&country=7437
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