

EnlargeEU Newsletter  
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## THE CHALLENGES OF URBAN LIVING

### Urban living: The challenges of city life

Currently, half of the world's population lives in urban centres and cities can be viewed as potential threats to environment around the world. Even countries as India, traditionally considered as rural, where 70 % of the total number of one billion population is still living in rural areas, is facing massive migration from rural communities. Macedonia is not an exception to this trend. In response to the mounting challenges to urban environment, the EU is striving for new urban policy and reformulating the idea of a European city. Following the directives from Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment as well as the Draft Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion 2007–2013, the EU has undertaken remarkable steps aimed at contributing to better implementation of EU environmental policies and legislation at local level. What is the significance of this fast growing interest for living in European cities and are we catching up with the European dimension of urban policy?

**Analyzing urban policy in Macedonia we can easily detect a gap in essentially important links among three main aspects of urban policy: physical, economic and social infrastructure.**

### Main problems of urban living in Macedonia:

Macedonian population is predominantly concentrated in urban areas, in first place in the city of Skopje, the capital. Major problems with regards to urban living that have emerged lately include high concentration of population, urban poverty, expansion of illegal settlements, traffic congestion, obsolete communal infrastructure, lack of regulations and low public awareness. This all has led to insufficient quality of urban life. One of the challenges of both local and national governments is defining plans aimed at improving the housing conditions in the settlements, especially the quality of living in small urban areas. Traffic also remains one of the most serious concern for urban planners and it is a definitely a lesson that can be learnt from other European cities facing traffic difficulties such as London where as the result of a new policy to shift from a dependence on cars to public transportation, car traffic has dropped by 5%. But regardless of the urban problems the cities are still promising destinations for living but mostly for practical economic reasons and finding jobs. In this context, the Government recently announced a project – building a new city in the Eastern part of the country envisioned to become a driver of the new Economical district.

### Improving Urban Living:

One thing is certain: the quality of urban life is becoming an issue among local authorities putting urban management challenges high on their agenda. It is also crucial for the country to follow global trends and directives. In 2004 Macedonia joined the countries that ratified Kyoto protocol and prepared national strategy on CDM. Urban living policy it is not just an attempt to organize city life; it is a redefined requirement that must ensure perspective for each city relevant to its unique characteristics and needs. There must be systematic plan that will improve the main urban living indicators and finally to maximize their overall potential, at first place in the country's economic growth and social development.

*Source: World Economic Forum*

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### Quick Facts:

**Major cities:** Skopje, Bitola, Tetovo, Prilep, Kumanovo.

**Urban population:** 60%

**Population density:** 81 inhab./km<sup>2</sup>

**Population Skopje:** 506.926

**Population density Skopje:** 887,07 inhab./km<sup>2</sup>

*Source: Ministry of Local Government*