

**North Macedonia Startup Ecosystem Guide 2025**  
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## Key Startup Cities

- **Skopje** – the capital and main startup hub, home to the majority of incubators, accelerators, and early-stage startups.
- **Tetovo** – known for its strong university presence and emerging tech scene.
- **Ohrid** – a growing destination for remote teams and digital nomads, blending natural beauty with tech potential.

## Regional Ecosystem Connections

- **Serbia, Bulgaria, Croatia** – Active collaboration, talent flows, and shared initiatives position North Macedonia as an increasingly integrated player in the broader Southeast European startup landscape.

## What Sets North Macedonia Apart

- **Cost-Effectiveness:** One of the most affordable countries in Europe for both living and building a business, offering extended runway potential for early-stage ventures.
- **Connectedness:** Tight-knit community with collaborative spirit and strong ties to the tech diaspora in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, and the US.
- **Tech Talent:** Home to a large pool of skilled developers, engineers, and IT professionals, many of whom are multilingual and internationally trained.

## Challenges to Navigate

- **Limited Market Size:** Small domestic market means startups must think internationally from day one.
- **Talent Gaps in Business Roles:** While there is strong tech talent, there is a shortage of experienced sales, growth, and C-level professionals.
- **Infrastructure Limitations:** Ongoing issues with digital financial tools (e.g., PayPal, Stripe) and bureaucratic regulatory hurdles can slow progress.
- **Brain Drain:** A long-standing trend of highly skilled individuals seeking better opportunities abroad continues to pose a risk.

## Ecosystem Overview

North Macedonia's startup ecosystem continues to evolve — with most of its momentum coming from the ground up. A new generation of startup founders, accelerators, and community builders is laying the foundation for a more connected, resilient, and innovation-driven economy.

Government involvement has been limited in recent years, but this hasn't stopped local actors from pushing forward. The entrepreneurial community is taking the lead, and in many ways, this independence has fostered a more dynamic and agile environment.

One of the ecosystem's greatest strengths is its **natural bootstrapping mindset**. Founders are resourceful, cost-conscious, and globally oriented. The relatively low cost of living and operations offers a strategic advantage for startups looking to extend their runway while building market-ready products.

The connection with the **diaspora and international markets** plays a critical role. Many successful Macedonian founders abroad are now giving back — providing mentorship, connections, and even investment opportunities to teams back home.

### **Internationalization: The Next Big Leap**

For Macedonian startups, expanding beyond national borders is both a necessity and an opportunity. However, many lack structured support or funding to scale internationally. Accelerators, soft-landing programs, and investor readiness initiatives remain underdeveloped. The WBSA and its partners aim to fill this gap through:

- Cross-border programs and immersion trips
- Peer-learning networks
- Community-driven investor matchmaking

### **Innovation and Performance**

According to the **Global Innovation Index (GII)**:

- **2021:** North Macedonia ranked 66th
- **2023:** Improved to 54th
- **2024:** Slight dip to 58th, though still above expectations for its development level

The country demonstrates particular strengths in **market sophistication**, **sustainability**, and the **creative sector**.

[!\[\]\(3211b5d1d968fc1665909b34f9f16010\_img.jpg\) European Innovation Scoreboard 2024 – North Macedonia Profile](#)

### **What's Next for the Ecosystem in 2025**

- **Formalization of Support Structures:** The establishment of new funds, incubators, and public-private partnerships is expected.
- **Stronger Regional Integration:** Efforts through the Western Balkans Startup Alliance and other networks are enabling cross-border scaling and visibility.
- **Youth and Women in Innovation:** Programs targeting underrepresented groups are growing, helping to broaden participation and drive inclusive growth.
- **Tech Meets Sustainability:** Green and digital startups are gaining more support, aligning with EU priorities and funding programs.