

A Century of Professionalism in Construction in North Macedonia (1920-2020)

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Introduction

On 21st March 1920 the first annual meeting of engineers and architects took place within the territory of the Skopje Construction Direction (*Скопска грађевинска дирекција*). This meeting led to the foundation of the Skopje Section of the Association of Yugoslavian Engineers and Architects (*Удружење југословенских инжењера и архитекта – Секција Скопје*). The minutes from the above meeting dated 29th March 1920 and signed by the Secretary Engineer Dim. S Jevtović (*Дим. С. Јевтовић*) and the Vice-President Engineer Nikola Đurić (*Никола Ђурић*) confirmed the decisions taken at the meeting and enclosed a copy of the association new statute [1, 2]. (Fig. 1) The foundation of the Skopje Section was made possible as more than 50 engineers and architects who were members of the Association of Yugoslavian Engineers and Architects were working on the territory of the Skopje Construction District. This allowed them to form a local Section of the Association, offering Full, Associate, Honorary, Correspondent and Voluntary Membership. The Associate Membership was open to technicians in practice undergoing university education, those in practice awaiting for their final technician exam, and business managers showing exceptional ability in the field. The newly formed Skopje Section undertook to collaborate and contribute to the journal of the Association of Yugoslavian Engineers and Technicians ‘Tehnički List’ (*Технички Лист*) [3].

The origins of the Association of the Yugoslavian Engineers and Technicians, established in 1919, go back to the foundation of the Technicians Society (*Техничарска дружина*) in Serbia in 1868 and followed by the Association of Serbian Engineers (*Удружење српских инжењера*) in 1890. The first President of the Association of the Yugoslavian Engineers and Architects in 1919 was Professor Kosta Glavinić (*Коста Главинић*). The records show that, within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (then Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1929), the Association had a total membership of 1,435 regular members in 1922 and 2,600 in 1934 [4].

The foundation of the Skopje Section of the Association of Yugoslavian Engineers and Architects is considered to be the starting point of the Western professionalism on the contemporary territory of North Macedonia. The centenary of this founding event was celebrated on 20th March 2020 by the Engineering Institution of Macedonia (*Инженерска институција на Македонија*), the successor organisation of the original Skopje Section of the Association of Yugoslavian Engineers and Architects [5]. The Engineering Institution of Macedonia became a member of the European Federation of National Engineering Associations (FEANI) in 2010 [6].

In 2020, a century after the foundation of the Skopje Section of the Association of Yugoslavian Engineers and Architects, it was estimated that over 10,000 students had graduated from the five-years full time degrees in civil engineering and architecture from the oldest course, founded in 1949, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University (*Универзитет Св. Кирил и Методиј*) in Skopje alone. At present, in a country of about two million population there are 25 accredited state (n=7) and private (n=18) universities or tertiary education institutions of which 10 of them (five state and five private) offer accredited programmes in civil engineering and/or architecture [7]. Since the 1970s construction companies from North Macedonia have been delivering construction projects in other parts of former Yugoslavia, Eastern and Central Europe,

Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Countries. Engineers and architects from North Macedonia have taken part in number of technical assistance missions following major disasters in former Yugoslavia and in other parts of the world.

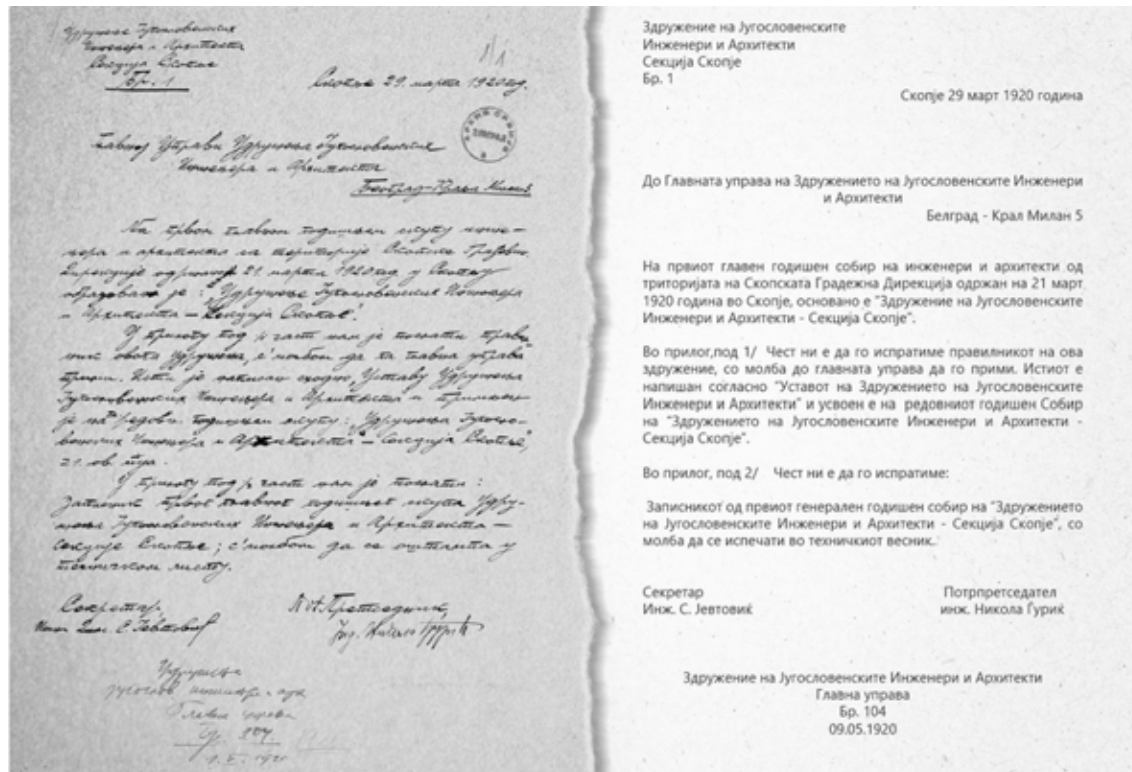


Fig. 1 The letter from the first meeting of the Association of Yugoslav Engineers and Architects - Skopje Section: left, 1920 original in Serbian and right, 2020 Macedonian translation (Engineering, Journal of Engineering Creation and Technology, In Macedonian, 2020, p. 8. - Used with permission by the Engineering Institution of Macedonia)

The turbulent history of the Balkan peninsula during the first half of the 20th Century marked by the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the First and Second Balkan Wars as well as the First and the Second World War, generated a significant level of instability and with only a brief period of about two decades of relative peace and stability between the two World Wars to support the development of professions and professionalism within any field. During that period, the territory of the present North Macedonia was part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that in 1929 became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

This paper focuses on the establishment of the foundation of professionalism within the construction industry in North Macedonia with a particular focus on the period between 1945-63 which coincides with the establishment of the Federal Unit Macedonia within Democratic and Federal Yugoslavia, which then became People's Republic of Macedonia within the People's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This study provides a further contribution to the increasing interest in the history of architecture and construction in North Macedonia.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic associated restriction the research has been limited to an analysis of primary and secondary source materials available in printed form or accessible via digital archives. The key part of this research is based on a the review of 640 available of the 649 originally published Official Gazettes in North Macedonia in the period between January 1945 and March 1963 covering the periods of the Federal Unit Macedonia and the People's Republic

of Macedonia [8]. The results of this research, focusing on the state legislation, cover three aspects associated with professionalism: formal education, professional registration and professional organisation.

Formal Professional Construction Related Education

The opportunities for formal professional education in the construction-related disciplines were very limited during the first half of the 20th Century in North Macedonia, both at secondary and tertiary level. As a result, the construction-related professions had to rely on construction education obtained elsewhere within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, former Yugoslavia or abroad.

Secondary Professional Construction Related Education

It is obvious that the Government of the Federal Unit of Macedonia realised very early on the need to introduce opportunities for construction-related formal education to support the post Second World War reconstruction efforts. Therefore, only few weeks after the liberation of the capital Skopje (13th November 1944), on 7th December 1944 the decision was made to establish the first Secondary Technical (Engineering) School in Skopje, now SGGU Zdravko Cvetkovski (*ЦИТУ Здравко Цветковски*), in North Macedonia [9].

This was followed by a further decision on 10th June 1946 to introduce Temporary Regulations for the Final Exam at the technical school for 1946 which included three possible engineering pathways: Construction, Electro-Technical and Mechanical [10]. The final exam for those studying Construction consisted of six written and 10 oral exams. The completion of the programme was dependent on three months of compulsory practical experience, organised by the Ministry of Construction, that could be waived by the Ministry on individual basis [11]. It appears that these Temporary Regulations were introduced in order to facilitate completion of the secondary technical education for those whose education was interrupted by the Second World War, including those who have completed a specified number of years within the former Bulgarian Technical School in Bitola [12]. This suggests that there was a Bulgarian Technical School in Bitola established during the Second World War, when most of North Macedonia was occupied by the Axis Powers, and the town of Bitola administered by the Kingdom of Bulgaria. However, it has not been possible to obtain further details on this school.

The development of the professional secondary education in construction related disciplines continued in the following years with the introduction of four-year long secondary school programmes on 16th December 1950 to include secondary-technical schools, as from academic year 1950/1951 [13]. Further changes have followed on 14th March 1956 by the introduction of a Diploma Exam in Secondary Technical Schools with compulsory professional practice and a maximum of three attempts allowed. The Diploma Exam for Construction consisted of four written and two oral exams. A representative from the Educational Council (*Совет за просвета*) had to be in attendance for the oral exams [14]. The amendments of 13th July 1957 waived the restriction on the number of attempts for the Diploma Exam and made the attendance of the representative from the Education Council optional [15].

Further changes in the legislation followed from 20th May 1960 when the Final Exam for the Secondary Technical School allowed for two pathways within the Construction-related discipline, one focusing on Construction (Civil Engineering) and the other on Geodesy (Land Surveying) [16]. Later in the year, on 26th November 1960, the existing Final Exams system was replaced with a new one to commence in the academic year 1960/1961. Under the new system, the existing approach with a number of written and oral exams, was replaced by a project prepared by the candidate during the final year at the school in combination with a written assignment in front of the exam board, culminating in a project related *Voice Viva* examination [17].

Tertiary Professional Construction Related Education

In general, the opportunities for tertiary education in the territory of North Macedonia were very limited in the first half of the 20th Century. The first opportunity for tertiary education came on 16th February 1920 when 33 students enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, which had been established as an autonomous unit of the University of Belgrade by Royal Decree of 2nd February 1920 within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. It offered courses in literature, linguistics, history, philosophy and pedagogy. Initially, it was housed within the well-known Ottoman Teachers School Idadija on the outskirts of Skopje, before moving into a purpose-built building the following academic year. However, this faculty ceased to exist at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1941 [18]. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2 The Old University Library, Skopje (lost in the 1963 Skopje Earthquake) by Unknown (By Unknown – the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (DARM), Skopje Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Univerzitetska_biblioteka,_Skopje,_pred_zemjotresot.jpg)

According to R. J. Crampton, a King Boris III University was established in Skopje during the Second World War in the Axis Powers occupied part of the country, administered by the Kingdom of Bulgaria, and appears to have been active between 1941 and 1944. However, there is very little information about the institution and the courses offered [19].

After the Second World War, the Faculty of Philosophy (Факултет за филозофија) was the first tertiary education institution to commence working in North Macedonia, offering courses in the academic year 1946/1947 [20]. On 25th November 1949 the University of Skopje Act was passed, leading to the foundation of the University of Skopje (Универзитет во Скопје), now University Ss. Cyril and Methodius (Универзитет Св. Кирил и Методиј), with three faculties: Philosophy, Medicine, and Agriculture and Forestry [21]. This was followed by the establishment of the Institute for Scientific Research in the Industry (Институт за научни истражувања во индустријата) on 31st August

1949 with a focus on applicative research aimed towards improvement and rationalisation of the production processes, discovery of new materials, as well as quality control and improvements that later became part of the Technical Faculty [22].

For construction related disciplines the most important date is the 28th December 1950 when the Technical Faculty in Skopje (Технички факултет во Скопје) was established with two departments, construction (civil engineering) and architecture offering 5 years (10 semesters) full time studies leading to the title Graduate Engineer (дипломиран инженер) in the selected field [23]. It should be noted that the faculty, that became part of the University of Skopje, actually commenced work in 1949, but the formal Government decisions followed later on.

In 1955 a number of improvements were instigated with the aim of improving the quality of tertiary education system. It was directed that, from 23rd May, elections and appointments to the posts of Assistant or Associate Professor could only be made to candidates without *Habilitation* or a Doctorate before 15th July 1958 and appointees who did not have these qualifications at appointment were required to gain a Doctorate or submit their *Habilitation* within four years of their appointment date [24]. This requirement was further reinforced by the new University of Skopje Act (Закон за Универзитетот во Скопје) published on 31st May 1956 and came into force 15 days later, which laid down a mandatory requirement for all appointments to Assistant, Associate or Full Professors to hold a Doctorate or *Habilitation*. Furthermore, promotion into Associate and Full Professor was available only to those with a significant publication record. The Act allowed for those in professorial teaching positions to remain employed until the end of the academic year in which they reached the age of 70. More importantly, the Act allowed for the introduction of Postgraduate Studies leading to Specialist qualifications or Doctorates [25].

As of 14th March 1961 the number of available places in the academic year 1961/1962 was limited to 160 full-time (Construction) and to 100 full-time (Architecture) students. In addition, there were 60 places available for part-time students across all four departments of the Technical Faculty: Construction, Architecture, Technology (Chemical Engineering) and Electro-Mechanical (Engineering) [26]. The number of available places was reduced to 100 full-time and 40 part-time students, and 80 full-time and 40 part-time students for the Department of Construction and Architecture respectively in the academic year 1962/1963 [27].

It is worth noting that it was possible to exit the Technical Faculty with an intermediate qualification leading to the title of Engineer (инженер) in the selected field for those who had successfully completed two and a half years (5 semesters) of full-time studies or part-time equivalent. If desired, they were able to continue their studies, leading to the Graduate Engineer (дипломиран инженер) title later on, by enrolling into the third year of the 5 year full-time programme or the longer part-time equivalent.

Construction-Related Professional Registration

After the end of hostilities, an early decision of the Government of the Federal Unit Macedonia allowed for the design and construction of building and civil works to continue before the official end of the Second World War: on 3rd May 1945, the members of the Association of Engineers and Technicians in Macedonia were officially permitted to engage in the design and building of construction-related works [28].

On 21st January 1949 Regulations for Probation (Practical) Experience, Professional Exam and Courses in the Construction Profession (Правилник за приправничкиот стаж, стручните испити и курсеви во градежната струка) were introduced. The Regulations identified five fields in construction discipline: architecture, urbanism, construction (civil engineering), transport (highways and railways) and hydro engineering. For example, in order for a people to qualify as a junior technicians or a junior engineers, upon completion of his/her education, they were expected to complete a minimum of 24 months and maximum of 30 months practical experience, of which at least 12 months had to be in a

design role and at least 12 months in a site construction role. The candidates were expected to keep a detailed diary for their practical experience. The Professional Exam for a Junior Technician consisted of a written and an oral exam. The written exam lasted up to five days with no more eight hours a day under constant supervision. Within this period the candidates were expected to prepare: (i) an initial and detailed design for a smaller residential or commercial building based on a given site plan and design brief, (ii) structural calculations for the key load bearing elements of the building, (iii) a cost analysis and (iv) a written justification of the proposal. In addition, they had to sit a minimum two hours oral exam covering the prescribed six areas of competence. Only three attempts were permitted for the exam. The Professional Exam for Junior Engineers was similar with the main difference being that they had a 15 day period to prepare a design for a larger residential, public, industrial or commercial building at home on their own. On successful completion of the written exam, they could proceed to the oral exam covering the prescribed six areas of competence. Similar Professional Exams were prescribed for Assistant Construction Draftsmen, Construction Supervisors Construction Managers and Senior Construction Technicians [29].



Fig. 3 The Main Square, Skopje (number of buildings lost in the 1963 Skopje Earthquake) (By Unknown – the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (DARM), Skopje Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Officers%27_Hall,_Skopje#/media/File:Panorama_so_Oficerski_dom.jpg)

Construction Related Professional Bodies

The status of the Association of Engineers and Technicians in Macedonia was reaffirmed in May 1949 and this in part facilitated the creation of more specialised construction-related societies in the years to come. The civil engineers and technicians led the way by gaining permission to establish the Society of Civil Engineers and Technicians of Peoples' Republic of Macedonia (*Друштво на градежни инженери и техници на НРМ*) in Skopje on 9th June 1951 [30],

followed by the Society of Architects in People's Republic of Macedonia (*Друштво на архитектите на Народна Република Македонија*) in Skopje on 26th June 1952 [31] and the Society of Electro-Mechanical Engineers and Technicians in Peoples' Republic of Macedonia (*Друштво на електромашинските инженери и техници во Народна Република Македонија*) in Skopje (granted permission on 22nd October 1952) [32]. The Society for Urbanism of PR Macedonia (*Урбанистичко друштво на НР Македонија*) was granted permission on 3rd September 1956. A majority of these societies continue to this day [33].



Fig. 4 The National Theatre, Skopje (lost in the 1963 Skopje Earthquake), Skopje by J. Bukovac, E. Bronštajn et al., (By Unknown – the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (DARM), Skopje Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skopje,_razglednica_so_teatarot.jpg)

Conclusions

Based on the available information, key milestones associated with the development of construction related professionalism in North Macedonia have been identified, from the modest beginning when some 50 members were able to establish the Skopje Section of the Association of Yugoslavian Architect and Engineers in early 1920, to the current Engineering Institution of Macedonia. Considering the turbulent history of the first half of the 20th Century, the research focused on the early endeavours in the post Second World period when the Federal Unit Macedonia was established within the Democratic and Federal Yugoslavia.

The findings indicate the intense efforts made in the 1945-50 period to establish the foundations of the construction industry and construction-related professionalism in the State. In the context of this research, the development of construction professionalism was investigated through the aspects of formal education, professional registration and professional organisation. The decisions were taken in a realistic and pragmatic manner, with consideration for the limited resources available and appreciation for the need for a post war reconstruction, with an evidence of actual actions taking place even before the decisions were formally made and announced. The early decision in 1945 allowed for the state Association of Engineers and Architect to carry on with the design and construction-related activities whilst new

arrangements were put in place in 1949, through the introduction of construction-related professional exams. The initial focus was on establishing a professional construction related Secondary Technical School in 1944 whilst allowing, through the temporary regulations of 1946, those with incomplete secondary technical education due to the war to complete it. This allowed for the training of much-needed construction-related professionals at a technician level, but also provided a recruitment base for future students and enough time for the establishment of the Technical Faculty at the University of Skopje in 1949. Equally, in 1949 the Institute for Scientific Research for the Industry was formed, stimulating applied research activities.



Fig. 5 Skopje Airport in the Interwar Period, Skopje, by Unknown, (By Unknown – the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (DARM), Skopje Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aerodromot_vo_Skopje,_20_vek.jpg)

The following six-year period (1950-56) appears to have been focused on the improvements within the secondary and tertiary education, through the requirements for *Habilitation* or Doctorate for the university teaching posts and the introduction of the possibility of postgraduate studies at the Technical Faculty leading to Specialist qualifications and Doctorates. Within the same period the key construction-related societies were established: Construction Engineers and Technicians (in 1951), Architects (in 1952), Electro-Mechanical Engineers and Technicians (in 1952) and the Urbanism (in 1956).

Thus, this paper has provided an outline of the early efforts aimed at developing construction related professionalism in North Macedonia and illustrated some of their professional achievements between 1920-63. (Fig. 3-10)



Fig. 6 The Main Railway Station, Skopje (lost in part in the 1963 Skopje Earthquake) by V. Gavrilović, (By Unknown – the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (DARM), Skopje Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zeleznicka_stanica_pred_zemjotresot.jpg)



Fig. 7 The Grand Hotel Macedonia, Skopje (lost in the 1963 Skopje Earthquake) by Unknown, (By Unknown – the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (DARM), Skopje Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hotel_Makedonija_pred_zemjotresot.jpg)



Fig. 8 Office Block (left) and Educational Building (right), Skopje (both lost in the 1963 Skopje Earthquake) (By Unknown – the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (DARM), Skopje Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pogled_od_vlezot_vo_Narodno_sobranie_pred_zemjotresot.jpg)



Fig. 9 Settlement Karpoš, Skopje, prior to the 1963 Skopje Earthquake (By Unknown – the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (DARM), Skopje Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karpos_pred_zemjotresot.jpg)



Fig. 10 Hall One under Construction, Skopje Fair, Skopje (lost in part in the 1963 Skopje Earthquake), by Unknown (By Unknown – the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (DARM), Skopje Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hala_1_od_Skopsko_sajmiste_pred_zemjotresot.jpg)

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