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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE MIGRATION POLICY RESOLUTION IN ENABLING ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN NORTH MACEDONIA

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ABSTRACT

The migration landscape is a dynamic phenomenon shaped by geopolitical shifts, economic transformations, and climate change. North Macedonia, located in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, serves as a critical transit country for significant migration patterns due to its strategic location and political aspirations towards Europe. Facing internal demographic challenges such as population decline and aging, the country is transitioning towards attracting immigration and becoming a destination for migrants. The Mediterranean Crisis of 2015 highlighted North Macedonia's pivotal role in migration routes, with over 800,000 individuals crossing its borders amid Europe's refugee and migrant influx. Despite containment efforts, the country remains part of mixed-movement routes, with significant border crossings observed in subsequent years. The long-term suspicions of brain drain were confirmed when the demographic census of 2021 revealed a startling 10% population decline over nearly two decades, emphasizing persistent outmigration and aging trends. To address migration challenges, North Macedonia adopted the Resolution on Migration Policy 2021-2025, aiming to establish a robust framework for managing both legal and illegal migrations.

Anticipatory governance emerges as a proactive approach to navigating migration complexities, incorporating foresight and policy integration to shape sustainable migration

policies in the country. The development of an Anticipatory Migration Governance model that seeks to foster transformative mindset shifts among stakeholders and institutionalize forward-looking planning, ensuring the effectiveness of migration management strategies. Through capacity development, improving of data collection, and decisions based on data, North Macedonia aims to navigate migration dynamics and achieve economic development with future-looking inclusive policies and collaboration.

Keywords: Migration, Anticipatory governance, Resolution on Migration Policy, Strategic Framework, Foresight

INTRODUCTION

The migration landscape is a dynamic phenomenon influenced by geopolitical shifts, economic transformations, and climate change. In the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, North Macedonia occupies a strategic location that renders it a pivotal transit country for significant migration patterns. Its geographic proximity and political aspirations towards Europe, coupled with a visa-free regime, have positioned it as both a transit point and an emigration destination. Moreover, the country grapples with internal demographic challenges, including population decline and aging, prompting a strategic shift towards attracting immigration and embracing its role as a destination for migrants.

The Mediterranean Crisis of 2015 underscored North Macedonia's crucial role in migration routes, with over 800,000 individuals crossing its borders amid Europe's surge in refugee and migrant influx. Despite containment efforts, the country remains part of mixed-movement routes, with significant border crossings observed in subsequent years, including 40,000 in 2020 and 27,495 in 2022. Concurrently, a demographic census in 2021 revealed a startling 10% population decline over nearly two decades (from 2.02 to 1.8 mil), highlighting persistent outmigration and aging trends. The demographic shifts in North Macedonia pose multifaceted challenges across social and economic domains. A shrinking population translates into a dwindling labor force, potential shortages in critical sectors, and reduced consumer demand, necessitating proactive measures to sustain societal and economic vitality. Consequently, the government is compelled to reevaluate healthcare, education, and pension systems to adapt to evolving demographic dynamics effectively. Moreover, North Macedonia's journey towards European integration significantly influences its migration governance. Alignment with EU standards and the *Acquis Communautaire* has led to the implementation of comprehensive migration policies, border management strategies, and law enforcement

collaboration. Despite notable progress, ongoing challenges persist, prompting the adoption of the Resolution on the Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2025. This strategic framework aims to address demographic challenges, facilitate labor market integration, promote social cohesion, and enhance regional coordination efforts.

Anticipatory governance emerges as a pivotal approach in navigating the complexities of human mobility. By adopting proactive and adaptive policies, North Macedonia seeks to capitalize on opportunities while mitigating risks associated with migration. Emphasizing inclusivity, economic opportunities, and human rights, the country aspires to cultivate a resilient and vibrant society in line with its long-term developmental objectives.

The theoretical underpinning of anticipatory governance is rooted in the recognition of the rapid pace of technological change and the uncertainty it brings. It suggests that traditional reactive governance models, which respond to issues as they arise, are ill-equipped to deal with the complexities of the modern world. Instead, anticipatory governance advocates for a proactive, future-oriented approach that seeks to anticipate potential challenges and opportunities. By adopting a forward-looking mindset, policymakers can transcend short-term considerations and envision long-term implications. This future-oriented perspective fosters resilience, sustainability, and proactive planning, ensuring that policy responses align with societal needs and aspirations. It also facilitates the formulation of robust policies, regulatory frameworks, and governance mechanisms that are adaptive to changing circumstances. One of the distinguishing features of anticipatory governance is its emphasis on collaboration. It encourages the involvement of various stakeholders, including the public, in the policy-making process. This inclusive approach ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more comprehensive and effective policies. Moreover, anticipatory governance promotes the use of evidence-based decision-making. By leveraging data and scientific research, it enables policymakers to make informed decisions that are grounded in reality. This not only enhances the credibility and legitimacy of policies but also increases their likelihood of success. Despite the challenges inherent in shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach and the uncertainties of future forecasting, the potential benefits of anticipatory governance, such as enhancing policymakers' ability to prepare for future developments and respond effectively to technological changes, make it a promising approach to policy formulation in the 21st century.

In this paper, we delve into the multifaceted dimensions of migration dynamics in North Macedonia, exploring the challenges, opportunities, and policy responses shaping its migration

landscape. Through this analysis, we aim to provide insights into effective anticipatory migration governance strategies and contribute to broader discourse on migration management in transitional societies.

The assessment of anticipatory governance on migration policy in North Macedonia is conducted through a multifaceted research approach. Qualitative research methods are employed to leverage professional expertise, examine the local context, and enrich the understanding of the migration complexities in the given context. Case studies provide real-world examples of anticipatory governance strategies and their impact on migration dynamics, offering practical insights into policy application that can be adapted in North Macedonia. Comparative analysis with international practices helps identify best practices and areas for improvement in migration governance in the policy creation and implementation. By integrating these research methods, the study presents a comprehensive view of the Anticipatory Governance Migration in North Macedonia, and the role of the Migration Policy Resolution and Action Plan, emphasizing the importance of evidence-based, nuanced, and comparative approaches to enhance the impact of anticipatory governance on migration policy in the country.

NORTH MACEDONIA MIGRATION POLICY RESOLUTION AND ACTION PLAN 2021-2025

The findings outlined in the IOM's "Migration in North Macedonia: A Country Profile 2021" and UN statistics, provide useful information on the country's demographic dynamics. These insights were crucial for informing policy decisions and planning for the future, including the Migration Policy Resolution.

From 2009 to 2019, North Macedonia saw a total of 7,954 citizens emigrate. The annual emigration numbers varied, with a low of 141 in 2017 and a peak of 1,330 in 2012. At the same time, according to UN data, by 2019, North Macedonia had 658,264 emigrants, representing 31.7% of the total population. On average, more men (53.09%) emigrated than women (46.90%). The primary destinations for these emigrants were Turkey (29.69%), Germany (13.75%), Italy (11.14%), Switzerland (10.16%), and Australia (7.84%). Simultaneously, North Macedonia experienced rising rates of immigration, primarily consisting of temporary migrants moving for employment or studies. This trend aligns with the continuous increase in foreigners' employment in the country, driven by increased foreign investment. Despite a small population, North Macedonia faces constant emigration, as evidenced by a net migration rate

of -0.482 per 1000 population in 2024, representing a 0.21% increase from 2023 and a loss of 200,000 inhabitants according to the 2021 census.

To answer the pressing demands, the Resolution on Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2025 stands as a strategic framework devised by an intra-governmental body to confront present and future migration challenges. Its origins trace back to 2008 when the first intergovernmental coordination body embarked on drafting the Resolution on Migration Policy 2009-2014, with a primary focus on managing external migration. Subsequent efforts led to the establishment of a new body, affiliated with the Prime Minister's Office, tasked with expanding the Resolution on Migration Policy 2015-2020. This body, comprised of representatives from twelve ministries/governmental institutions and four international organizations, yielded positive outcomes. However, feedback from surveys highlighted the need for clearer responsibilities delineation and enhanced preparation time. In March 2021, the current intergovernmental coordination body came into existence, playing a pivotal role in formulating the Resolution on Migration Policy 2021-2025. Beyond crafting the new resolution, this body provides guidance to ministries and conducts annual revisions of the Migration Profile of North Macedonia.

The Resolution on Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia (2021-2025) aims to establish a robust framework for managing both legal and illegal external migrations, thereby fostering the country's development by addressing migration-related challenges and leveraging opportunities. The resolution is structured around five strategic areas, each with specific goals:

1. **Support Framework:** This strategic area aims to enhance the capacities and coordination role of the Inter-governmental body responsible for developing and implementing the country's migration policy.
2. **Reliable and Relevant Data on External Migration:** Emphasizing the significance of accurate statistics and information on legal and illegal migration movements, this strategic area aligns with the statistical results of the 2021 Census, enabling policymakers to make informed decisions and develop effective migration management strategies.
3. **Managing Legal Migration:** Several strategic goals are outlined, including reducing permanent emigration intensity, increasing the return of Macedonian citizens abroad, facilitating the admission of foreign labor, improving policies related to residence and

readmission of foreigners, and enhancing the efficiency of the established asylum system.

4. **Control and Management of Illegal Migration:** This area highlights the need to strengthen national capacities for timely, effective prevention, detection, and management of illegal migration, emphasizing the country's commitment to ensuring border integrity.
5. **Building Partnerships and International Cooperation:** Advocating for partnerships and international cooperation, the resolution underscores the importance of collaborating with other countries and organizations to address migration challenges collectively. This strategic approach emphasizes the need for a global response to migration issues to achieve sustainable development and ensure the well-being of migrants and host communities.

The Action Plan complements the Resolution on Migration Policy by outlining specific activities and measures to achieve the goals set for the period 2021-2025. It underscores the importance of data-driven decision-making, effective management of regular and irregular migration, and fostering partnerships and international cooperation in the realm of migration management. The activities in the Action Plan are based on each of the identified strategic areas, strategic goals, and specific strategic goals, measures, and activities have been identified that should enable efficient management of the migration processes. The Action Plan aims to create institutional and other prerequisites for the sustainable and comprehensive management of migration flows, with the goal of promoting the country's development. It emphasizes the importance of accurate and disaggregated data as a policy basis, which is crucial for implementing realistic measures and making precise recommendations for more efficient management of migration flows. Additionally, the Action Plan highlights the need to strengthen data collection mechanisms to support evidence-based policymaking, with the aim of applying five data management tools/mechanisms by relevant institutions by 2022

ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN MIGRATION POLICYMAKING IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Anticipatory governance in migration involves a proactive and forward-looking approach to managing migration flows by anticipating future challenges and opportunities. It focuses on preparing for potential migration crises, developing strategies to address them, and fostering resilience within the migration system. Anticipatory governance aims to move

beyond reactive responses to migration events by incorporating foresight, data-driven decision-making, and long-term planning into migration policy and management. This approach allows policymakers to better understand the dynamics of migration, predict trends, and implement measures to mitigate risks and maximize the benefits of migration.

Anticipatory governance, characterized by the integration of foresight and policy in migration management, has garnered attention as a proactive approach to addressing future challenges and opportunities. This approach has been exemplified in various contexts, including the European Union's response to the refugee crisis of 2015. Through initiatives like the European Agenda on Migration, which incorporated scenario planning and foresight methodologies, the EU sought to better anticipate and respond to migration trends and challenges (OECD, Towards 2035 Making Migration and Integration Policies Future Ready). These practical applications underscore the value of anticipatory governance in shaping sustainable, inclusive, and responsive migration policies.

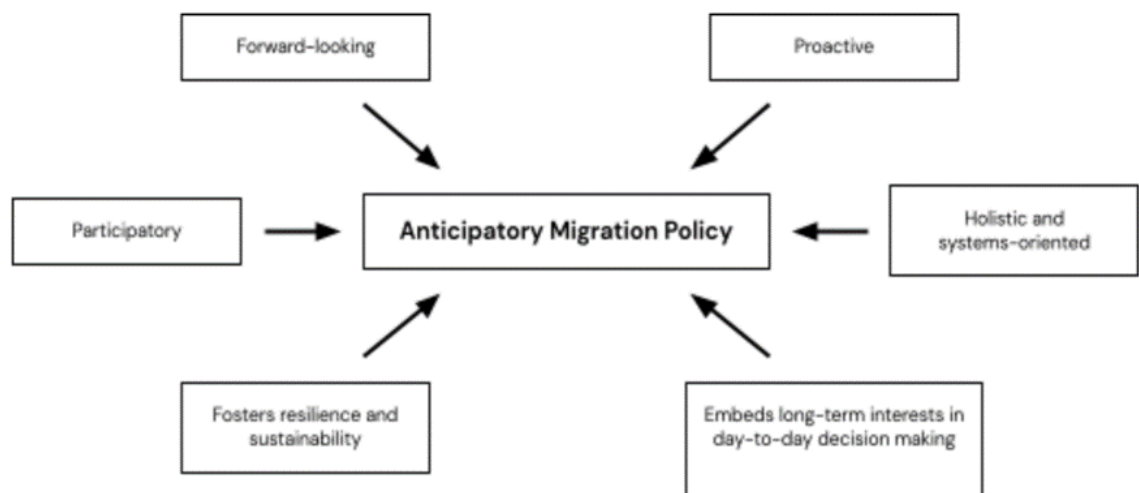


Figure 1. Graphic representation of attributes of Anticipatory Migration Policy, adapted from Jonathan Boston's research on Anticipatory Governance (Boston, J., & Berman, E. (2017))

Academics, including van Asselt, have underscored the significance of strategic foresight in proactive governance, underlining its influence in formulating policies and plans to tackle future obstacles and prospects. By integrating foresight techniques into governance procedures systematically, policymakers acquire crucial knowledge about future situations, tendencies, and hazards linked to novel technologies. Strategic foresight provides leaders with the resources to predict, assess, and influence the societal, economic, and environmental consequences of technological progress. Consequently, this forward-thinking and informed

strategy aids in the creation of solid policies, regulatory structures, and governance systems. A key characteristic of proactive governance is its focus on a future-centric viewpoint. Recognizing the swift rate of technological evolution, proactive governance urges leaders to go beyond immediate concerns and contemplate long-term effects. By embracing a future-focused mentality, policymakers can foresee and get ready for potential disturbances, risks, and opportunities presented by novel technologies. This future-centric viewpoint promotes resilience, sustainability, and forward planning, ensuring that governance reactions are in line with societal desires and expectations. Hence, proactive governance advocates for forward-thinking decision-making based on a profound comprehension of possible future evolutions. Instead of responding to unexpected occurrences, proactive governance demands prompt and informed actions that tackle emerging issues and seize opportunities. By utilizing strategic foresight and cooperative processes, decision-makers can foresee emerging trends, evaluate potential effects, and devise flexible policies and strategies.

In North Macedonia, the imperative to establish anticipatory governance in migration is emphasized by recommendations outlined in the Resolution on Migration Policy 2021-2025 and its accompanying Action Plan, Strategic Goal. 2.1. Moreover, previous studies, such as the Assessment of collection and exchange mechanisms of migration data in North Macedonia, highlight a shifting migratory landscape and need for accompanying action. Building upon consultations, interviews, and comprehensive desk research, including analyses of past and present migration policies, the need for anticipatory governance became apparent. As a response, a preliminary version of an Anticipatory Migration Governance model for North Macedonia was formulated by a team of experts. Recognizing the importance of strategic foresight, North Macedonia emphasizes its role in shaping policies and strategies to address future challenges and opportunities. By systematically embedding foresight methodologies across governance processes, decision-makers gain insights into future scenarios, trends, and associated risks. Strategic foresight equips policymakers with tools to anticipate, evaluate, and shape societal, economic, and environmental impacts, facilitating the formulation of robust policies and regulatory frameworks (OECD, Strategic Foresight for Better Policies, 2019).

The implementation of Anticipatory Governance in Migration in North Macedonia lays the groundwork for successful policy formulation and execution, aiming to ensure the country's long-term prosperity. A comprehensive training initiative engaged 328 stakeholders, including members of the intergovernmental body, government representatives, civil society organizations (CSOs), and UN staff, resulting in an impressive knowledge retention rate of nearly 80%. This inclusive approach captured insights from key stakeholders, reinforcing the robust foundation of Anticipatory Governance in Migration. Furthermore, an in-depth examination of the local context and an extensive review of international practices fortified the framework. Leveraging professional expertise in the field contributed to a well-structured systematization of proposed methods. The concurrent capacity-building efforts provided a nuanced understanding of essential requirements in human capital for anticipatory governance and the complexities of the migration environment and facilitated an environment for development of future scenarios, enriching the model with diverse perspectives. The resulting Anticipatory Governance model for Migration in North Macedonia emerges as a comprehensive and well-informed framework, equipped to navigate migration dynamics with a forward-thinking and adaptable approach. Overall, this model when applied will complement the systemic and systematic approach to migration governance that the Resolution and Action Plan envisions.

CONCLUSION

Anticipatory governance involves anticipating future trends, risks, and opportunities and taking preemptive actions to shape desired outcomes. The Resolution on Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2025 serves as a comprehensive framework for addressing migration challenges and leveraging opportunities for the country's development. Through its strategic areas and specific goals, the resolution aims to strengthen capacities, improve data collection and analysis, manage legal and illegal migration, enhance international cooperation, and promote social cohesion. In the context of migration governance in North Macedonia, the Resolution on Migration and accompanying action plan demonstrate several key elements of Anticipatory Governance:

Future Orientation: The resolution and action plan acknowledges the dynamic nature of migration patterns and seeks to anticipate future migration trends and challenges. By addressing root causes of emigration, enhancing data availability, and strengthening institutional capacities, the plan aims to build resilience and adaptability in the face of evolving migration dynamics.

Strategic Planning: Anticipatory governance involves strategic planning and long-term thinking to guide policy development and decision-making. The resolution and action plan articulate clear strategic goals and associated activities to address key challenges in migration governance. By setting objectives related to institutional capacity-building, data analysis, and integration efforts, the plan provides a roadmap for proactive policy action.

Collaboration and Coordination: Anticipatory governance emphasizes collaboration and coordination among diverse stakeholders to address complex challenges. The resolution and action plan underscore the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement, data-sharing agreements, and partnerships with international organizations to enhance migration governance. By fostering collaboration among government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners, the plan seeks to leverage collective expertise and resources to achieve shared objectives.

Adaptive Management: Anticipatory governance involves adaptive management practices that enable flexibility and responsiveness to changing circumstances. The resolution and action plan include mechanisms for monitoring progress, evaluating the impact of policies, and adjusting strategies as needed. By establishing monitoring mechanisms and conducting regular assessments of implementation effectiveness, the plan facilitates ongoing learning and adjustment to optimize outcomes.

Overall, the resolution and action plan reflect principles of anticipatory governance by promoting proactive, collaborative, and adaptive approaches to migration governance in North Macedonia. By integrating anticipatory principles into policy development and implementation processes, the plan aims to enhance the effectiveness, resilience, and sustainability of migration governance efforts.

The development of an Anticipatory Migration Governance model underscores the country's commitment to proactive and innovative policymaking. Through systematic analysis, capacity-building efforts, and transformative mindset shifts among stakeholders, North Macedonia aims to institutionalize forward-looking planning and ensure the effectiveness of its migration management strategies. The integration of anticipatory governance principles into migration policy represents a paradigm shift towards proactive, inclusive, and responsive governance. By embracing foresight methodologies and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, North Macedonia is poised to navigate the complexities of migration dynamics

and achieve sustainable development goals in the years to come, as enabled by the Resolution on Migration.

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