

Handbook on 2024 Presidential Elections in the Republic of North Macedonia



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Introduction

Introduction to the Seventh Presidential Elections in the Republic of North Macedonia

The seventh presidential elections in the Republic of North Macedonia will be held on 24 April 2024. Seven candidates will run at the presidential elections in the Republic of North Macedonia: the incumbent President and candidate of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), Stevo Pendarovski, the candidate of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), Gordana Siljanovska Davkova, the candidate of Levica, Biljana Vankovska Cvetkovska, the candidate of the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), Bujar Osmani, the candidate of the coalition “Vredi”, Arben Taravari, the candidate of “Dvizenje ZNAM – Za nasa Makedonija”, Maksim Dimitrievski, and the candidate of the Civic Option for Macedonia (GROM), Stevcho Jakimovski.

The presidential elections were called on 14.02.2024, when the President of the Assembly, Jovan Mitreski, in accordance with the constitutional and legal obligations, signed the decision to announce the election of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia.¹

According to the decision, the first round of presidential elections will be held on April 24, 2024, meaning that the possible second presidential election round will be held on May 8, 2024, along with the regular parliamentary elections.

On 14 February, the State Election Commission (SEC) adopted the calendar of electoral activities to administer the presidential elections.²

According to the calendar, the procedure for collecting signatures for presidential candidates began on 23 February and ended on 8 March at 24:00 hrs. Collecting signatures was carried out in all regional departments and offices of the SEC, located in the seats of 34 local self-government units and before the competent notaries.

According to SEC data, 7 out of 15 candidates collected the necessary 10,000 signatures to partake in the presidential elections. The candidates of VMRO-DPMNE,

1 Decision to call elections <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LgvXvn7cx3IWbxLchlxEZY0cjyiKqYB/view> (last visit 25.03.2024)

2 Calendar of electoral actions for administering the elections for President of the Republic of North Macedonia https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iN8Gim1W542gkDasz_aDHk0pX_43dEcZ/view (last visit 25.03.2024)

Gordana Siljanovska Davkova and SDSM, Stevo Pendarovski, despite the support of the political parties, confirmed their candidacies by collecting signatures.³ The contestants Velo Markovski, Mersiha Smailovic, Gjorgji Manaskov, Zorica Cvetkovska, Gospodin Poposki, Tome Nikolovski, Goce Ristov and Dragan Nikolovski failed to collect the required number of signatures.⁴

The incumbent President, Stevo Pendarovski, officially announced on 01.03.2024 that he would run for office again. In the race for a second term, Pendarovski stressed that he had received public support from a large number of citizens, some of them public figures, professors and cultural workers. SDSM at the congress held on 03.03.2024 with 706 votes in favor, decided to officially support Stevo Pendarovski as their candidate in the presidential elections.⁵ On 04.03.2024, SDSM's traditional coalition partners supported Stevo Pendarovski's candidacy for president. Given the fact that Pendarovski announced that this was a citizen's candidacy, his candidacy was also confirmed by collecting signatures.

The incumbent MP and university professor, Gordana Siljanovska Davkova, is a presidential candidate of VMRO-DPMNE. At the party convention held on 02.03.2024, Siljanovska Davkova was elected to be VMRO-DPMNE's candidate in the upcoming presidential elections, with the support of 444 delegates.⁶ Siljanovska Davkova was the only candidate at the party convention, and along with the candidacy she also submitted a plan, a program of work and the required number of signatures of delegates. The candidacy was confirmed by collected signatures from citizens, however, those were not submitted to the SEC.⁷

The current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bujar Osmani, is the presidential candidate of DUI. At the convention held on 9 March under the motto "The time has come for the first Albanian president", DUI promoted their presidential candidate, Bujar Osmani.⁸

3 Status of the number of collected signatures for candidates for President of the country, until 08 March 2024, 20:00 hrs. <https://www.sec.mk/pretsedatelski-izbori-2024/#tab-id-9> (last visit 25.03.2024)

4 The presidential candidate should be nominated by at least 10,000 voters (by collecting signatures) or by 30 MPs.

5 SDSM confirmed the presidential candidacy of Stevo Pendarovski <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/32846165.html> (last visit on 25.03.2023)

6 Gordana Siljanovska Davkova was elected as VMRO-DPMNE's candidate for President <https://kanal5.com.mk/gordana-siljanovska-davkova-e-izbrana-za-kandidat-na-vmro-dpmne-za-pretsedatel/a628507> (last visit on 25.03.2023)

7 Siljanovska-Davkova's candidacy to the SEC is without civil signatures because it is a matter of protocol – VMRO-DPMNE says <https://360stepeni.mk/kandidaturata-na-siljanovska-davkova-do-dik-e-bez-graganski-potpisi-zatoa-shto-toa-e-protokolarna-rabota-velat-od-vmro-dpmne/> (last visit on 25.03.2023)

8 Osmani officially promoted as presidential candidate of DUI <https://360stepeni.mk/osmani-i-ofitsijalno-promoviran-za-pretsedatelski-kandidat-na-dui-predizvitsite-se-golemi-bitno-e-da-bide-vistinskiot-chovek-na-vistinska-funksija/> (last visit on 25.03.2023)

The president of the Alliance for Albanians (AA) and the mayor of Gostivar, Arben Taravari, announced on 15 February at a joint press conference with the leaders of Besa- Bilal Kasami, Alternativa- Afrim Gashi and the Democratic Movement - Izet Medziti that he would be a candidate for president of the country. Arben Taravari as the presidential candidate of the Albanian opposition, united in the “Vredi” coalition, was promoted on 2 March at a convention held in Gostivar.⁹ Arben Taravari’s candidacy caused an intra-party split in AA and raised the question of who is the legitimate leader of the party. The former AA leader -Zijadin Sela, pointed out that the party bodies did not take a decision that Taravari would be a candidate in the upcoming presidential elections and that he acted on his own initiative contrary to the party’s position to act independently in elections. On 16 February, at an extraordinary congress attended by 421 delegates, the wing of Arben Taravari dismissed Ziadin Sela as chairman of the Central Presidency and re-elected Taravari as leader of the Alliance for Albanians. Zijadin Sela’s wing at an extraordinary congress on 18 February dismissed Arben Taravari from the party presidency due to a series of violations of the party statute and unanimously, with 591 votes, elected Zijadin Sela as leader of the party.¹⁰

A legal decision is pending from the court in Tetovo as regards who has the right to take over the leadership of the party.

The mayor of Kumanovo and leader of the party ZNAM, Maksim Dimitrievski is a candidate for president of the country from this new political entity in the upcoming presidential elections. Maksim Dimitrievski’s candidacy was formalized at the first congress of the political party “Dvizenje ZNAM – Za nasa Makedonija” held on 22 February in Skopje.¹¹

Professor Biljana Vankovska Cvetkovska from the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje is a presidential candidate of the party Levica. Biljana Vankovska Cvetkovska’s candidacy was officially announced at a press conference of the party Levica on 7 February.¹²

9 Taravari promoted for presidential candidate, “Vredi” held a Convention in Gostivar <https://plusinfo.mk/taravari-promoviran-za-pretsedatelski-kandidat-vredi-odrzha-konvenci-a-vo-gostivar/> (last visit on 25.03.2023)

10 Dismissed Sela dismisses Taravari from leadership position in Alliance for Albanians? <https://telma.com.mk/2024/02/18/razresheniot-sela-go-razreshi-taravari-od-liderskata-poziczija-vo-alijansa-za-albancite/> (last visit on 25.03.2024)

11 First congress of ZNAM, official presidential candidacy of Maksim Dimitrievski <https://a1on.mk/macedonia/prv-kongres-na-znam-oficijalizirana-pretsedatelskata-kandidatura-na-maksim-dimitrievski/> (last visit on 25.03.2023)

12 Biljana Vankovska - presidential candidate of Levica <https://www.dw.com/mk/profesorkata-biljana-vankovska-veguva-vo-trkata-za-pretsedatel-kako-kandidat-na-levica/a-68192357> (last visit 25.03.2024)

The incumbent mayor of the Municipality of Karposh and leader of the GROM party, Stevcho Jakimovski, is a presidential candidate from the party in the upcoming elections. At the session held on 21 February, the Central Board of GROM decided that Stevco Jakimovski will be the party's candidate for president of the country.¹³

At the session held on 22 March, the SEC confirmed the candidacies for President of the Republic of North Macedonia in 2024. Given that the lists of candidates were submitted in accordance with the legal requirements and deadlines, the Commission confirmed the Lists for candidates for President of the Republic of North Macedonia in 2024 in the order of their submission to the State Election Commission.¹⁴

The election campaign for the presidential elections scheduled for 24 April this year begins on 4 April at 00:00 and will continue until 24:00 hrs on 22 April.

On 21 March, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) launched the observation mission in North Macedonia for the presidential and parliamentary elections. 320 observers will be recruited for the two election cycles, 20 long-term and 300 short-term observers.¹⁵

These are the 22nd elections in the country to be monitored by the OSCE/ODIHR. The 2021 local elections were the last elections that were monitored by the mission.

After months of political turmoil over the constitutional changes and the increased demands of the opposition for early parliamentary elections, leaders of the political parties represented in the Parliament at the meeting held on 4 December 2023 agreed on the presidential and parliamentary elections. Political leaders reached an agreement by broad consensus to hold parliamentary elections on Wednesday, 8 May, along with the second round of presidential elections. Earlier, on 24 April, also on Wednesday, the first round of presidential elections will be held. 8 May was the only possible date to ensure that parliamentary elections are held within their regular term, and presidential elections to be completed by the end of Stevo Pendarovski's term of office on 12 May. Apart from the election dates, the leaders of SDSM -Dimitar Kovacevski and VMRO-DPMNE- Hristijan Mickoski, stressed that at the leadership meeting there was also a broad consensus on accepting the OSCE/

13 Stevcho Jakimovski, presidential candidate of GROM <https://24.mk/details/stevcho-jakimovski-kandidat-za-pretседatel-na-grom> (last visit 25.03.2024)

14 Information from the eighty-eighth session of the State Election Commission <https://www.sec.mk/izvestuvanje-od-osumdeset-i-osmata-sednica-na-drzhavnata-izborna-komisija-odrzhana-na-21-mart-2024-godina/> (last visit 25.03.2024)

15 OSCE/ODIHR opens election observation mission in North Macedonia <https://www.osce.org/mk/odihr/elections/565066> (last visit 25.03.2024)

ODIHR comments on the Electoral Code. At the leadership meeting, no agreement was reached on the constitutional changes.¹⁶

According to the law, on 28 January, or 100 days before the elections, a caretaker (Przino) government was formed. Prime Minister Dimitar Kovacevski and Parliament Speaker Talat Xhaferi resigned on 25 January. With 65 votes in favor and three against, the Assembly of North Macedonia voted the caretaker government headed by the first Albanian Prime Minister, Talat Xhaferi from DUI.¹⁷ DUI leader - Ali Ahmeti stressed that this was a historic day, and DUI celebrated the election with red ties that read Prime Minister – Albanian – 28.01.2024.¹⁸ The main task of the caretaker government is to organize fair and democratic parliamentary elections. Although the largest opposition party VMRO-DPMNE proposed its own candidates in the government, they did not vote for election of the government as they objected to the government being led by Talat Xhaferi. According to the experiences thus far with the caretaker governments, this political maneuver is happening for the second time because even though SDSM proposed ministers in 2016, they left the session and did not vote for the caretaker government led by Emil Dimitriev from VMRO-DPMNE.¹⁹ This is the third transitional or caretaker government since 2016.

The incumbent president, Stevo Pendarovski, and the candidate of the main opposition party VMRO-DPMNE, Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, are running again in these elections, while the Albanian electorate will have the opportunity to vote for two Albanian presidential candidates. To strengthen their positions before the elections, the Albanian political parties raised the question of electing the president in the Assembly, but the main political parties VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM stressed that they were against the idea of scrapping the direct elections for president and electing the head of state by consensus in the Assembly.²⁰

Although on the eve of the presidential elections it was hinted that SDSM and DUI would proceed with a joint presidential candidate, i.e. Stevo Pendarovski would be a consensual candidate again in these elections, DUI decided to have its own candidate in the elections.²¹

16 Agreement reached on elections: Presidential elections on 24 April, and parliamentary elections on 8 May with a second round presidential elections <https://360stepeni.mk/postignat-dogovor-za-izborite-na-24-april-pretsedatelski-a-na-8-maj-parlamentarni-so-vtor-krug-pretsedatelski/> (last visit 25.03.2024)

17 Elected caretaker government headed by Xhaferi <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/32795231.html> (last visit 25.03.2024)

18 DUI celebrates Xhaferi's election as technical prime minister with red ties - <https://360stepeni.mk/dui-go-slavi-izborot-na-dhaferi-za-tehnichki-premier-so-tsrvni-vratovrski/> (last visit on 25.03.2024)

19 In 2016, SDSM did not vote for the caretaker government - <https://alsat.mk/mk/vo-2016-godina-sdsm-ne-glasashe-za-tehnichkata-vlada/> (last visit on 25.03.2024)

20 For and against the election of the President by the Assembly <https://telma.com.mk/2024/02/24/za-i-protiv-izborot-na-pretsedatel-vo-sobranie/> (last visit 25.03.2024)

21 DUI decide to have its own candidate in the presidential elections <https://kanal5.com.mk/dui-odluchi-da-ima-svoji-kandidat-na-pretsedatelskite-izbori/a364404> (last visit 25.03.2024)

The reasons for this decision are largely due to the fact that the united Albanian opposition in these elections came up with a joint candidate for president, but also due to the disagreements in the run-up to the elections between DUI and President Pendarovski regarding the Law on Games of Chance.²²

Political disagreements and mutual accusations followed after President Stevo Pendarovski refused to sign the Law on Games of Chance and Entertainment Games, saying this is due to serious indications from the EU that the European flag was being misused.²³

Unlike the previous presidential elections held in 2019 when there were three candidates, there are seven presidential candidates in this election, which will contribute to increased political polarization in the coming period, and given the uncertain election race, one can expect an election campaign focused on discrediting the opponents. The overlap of the election campaigns for the presidential and parliamentary elections will be further utilized to sharpen the political rhetoric aimed at strengthening the positions of the presidential candidates.

In this context, the OSCE/ODIHR in its report assessing the pre-election environment warned of possible volatility and uncertain elections. Concerns have also been expressed about the possible misuse of state resources and pressure on public sector employees, as well as intolerant rhetoric that exacerbates the tense political environment. The report states that media coverage of the election campaign is fragmented and polarized, there is a significant increase in nationalist rhetoric that can result in increased unrest and tensions, as well as rise in intolerant and violent rhetoric that can also be interpreted as hate speech.²⁴

On 18 March, the US Department of State announced that the mayor of the Municipality of Karposh and presidential candidate in the upcoming elections, Stevco Jakimovski, had been blacklisted for corrupt acts that undermine the rule of law and public trust in democratic institutions.²⁵ Candidate Stevco Jakimovski replied that what was happening because of his candidacy is dishonest and that it is an attempt to interfere in the election process.²⁶

22 DUI against Pendarovski: He signed the Criminal Code with the European flag, although the EU objected <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/32820714.html> (last visit 25.03.2024)

23 President Pendarovski did not sign the Decree proclaiming the Law on Amending the Law on Games of Chance and Entertainment Games https://pretsedatel.mk/dopis_13022024/ (last visit 25.03.2024)

24 DUI against VREDI: Who is preparing a political crisis? <https://telma.com.mk/2024/03/14/dui-kontra-vredi-koj-podgotvuva-politichka-kriza/> (last visit 25.03.2024)

25 The United States blacklisted Katica Janeva and Stevcho Jakimovski <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/32866680.html> (last visit 25.03.2024)

26 Jakimovski on the blacklist: I'm surprised, this is dishonest <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/32867504.html> (last visit 25.03.2024)

Given that the parliamentary elections will be held on 8 May, the first round of presidential elections will undoubtedly contribute to the political positioning and mobilization of the parties' membership in the run-up to parliamentary elections. The results of the first round will determine the further political constellations and will lead to pronounced cross-party political negotiations ahead of the parliamentary elections and the certainty of the second round of the presidential elections.

Preparations for the presidential election

On 14 February, the SEC adopted the Calendar of electoral activities to administer the presidential elections.²⁷ Within the preparatory activities, the SEC continuously replaces the members of the Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) whose mandate either terminated or dismissals were requested, but no later than 26 March. According to the calendar, the Municipal Election Commission (MEC) should establish the Election Boards (EBs) no later than 26 March, and by that time the SEC should also form the EBs in the DCOs.

The public inspection of the Voter list in the SEC regional offices, on the website <http://izbirackispisok.gov.mk/>, as well as in the DCOs (for out-of-country voting) was opened in the period 28 February - 18 March 2024. During this period, any citizen who finds they are not on the Voters list and who meets the eligibility criteria to vote, could request to be registered. In the period from the announcement of the elections to the closing of the public inspection of the Voters list, citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia who live abroad and who meet the conditions for out-of-country voting could apply to exercise this right.

The Voter list in which all changes resulting from the public inspection were made, printed in the form of extracts, is concluded by the SEC no later than 15 days after the completed public inspection, i.e. no later than 2 April. The SEC signs the concluded Voter List, i.e. the extracts of the Voter List on which votes are cast, no later than 15 days before the day of the elections, i.e. no later than 8 April.

According to the calendar, the financial reports (specifying the costs of revenues and expenditures on the bank account) of the organizers of the election campaign are submitted to the SEC, the State Audit Office (SAO) and the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) within the following deadlines:

²⁷ Calendar of electoral activities for administering the 2024 elections for President of the Republic of North Macedonia https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iN8Gim1W542gkDasz_aDHK0pX_43dEcZ/view (last visit 25.03.2024)

- » on 12 May for campaign revenues and expenditures from the first round, if a second round of voting is not held, or on 26 May if a second round is held, for the revenues and expenditures in the second part of the election campaign;
- » the total financial report is to be submitted no later than 15 days after the closure of the bank accounts to the SEC, SAO, SCPC and the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Also, broadcasters, print media and electronic media (internet portals) are obliged to submit a report to the Ministry of Finance (MoF), SEC, SAO and SCPC on the advertising space used by each of the participants in the election campaign, no later than 7 May if a second round is not held, and no later than 21 May if a second round of voting is held.

In accordance with Article 8-a of the Electoral Code, 20 days before the start of the election campaign, is the start of a period in which no public events can be held on the occasion of launching a construction or commissioning of a facility or infrastructure financed with funds from the Budget, public funds, as well as funds of public enterprises with state capital.²⁸

With the transitional provision of the amendments to the Electoral Code that will apply only to the elections in 2024, voters will be able to vote with an ID card or a passport whose validity has expired in the period of 9 months until the day of the elections. At the presidential elections, citizens who have expired personal documents on any basis from 24.07.2023 until day of elections or until 24.04.2024 will be able to vote.²⁹

Latest changes to the electoral legislation

Since the last presidential elections in the country, the provisions of the Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM) underwent several changes. In March of this year, in a shortened procedure and with 84 votes in favor, the Assembly adopted the new amendments to the Electoral Code. Changes relate to state election management bodies, political campaign finance, campaign participants, as well as election campaign media coverage.³⁰

28 Electoral Code <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZJMruqcNI-yC5VuWSzpfT9BFekpHm5An/view> (last visit 25.03.2024)

29 The State Election Commission held a briefing with journalists <https://www.sec.mk/drzhavnata-izborna-komisija-odrzha-brifing-so-novinari/> (last visit 25.03.2024)

30 Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, Law Amending the Electoral Code 58/2024

The new developments with the expired validity of citizens' personal documents led to a serious danger that over 100,000 citizens would be denied the right to vote in the upcoming elections. At the proposal of the SEC, the amendments to the Electoral Code also included a transitional provision to ensure voters' right to vote with an ID card or passport that expired in the period of nine months until the day of the presidential and parliamentary elections.³¹

Furthermore, the provisions on registration of new voters have been clarified, so everyone who turns 18 until Election Day will have the right to vote, meaning that citizens who become adults between the two election cycles will only have the right to vote in parliamentary elections.³²

Three days prior to the start of the presidential election campaign, MPs unanimously adopted the Law Amending the Electoral Code that further clarifies the provisions on determining the ordinal number on the ballot for both electoral cycles, i.e. political parties that nominated or supported a presidential candidate can keep the same ordinal numbers also for the parliamentary elections, thus ensure more visible presentation to citizens. Political parties that do not nominate a presidential candidate, but run for parliamentary elections, will draw lots at the SEC to determine the actual ordinal numbers for the elections.³³

State Election Commission

A citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia with a permanent residence in the country, university degree, at least eight years of work experience and who is not a member of a political party body can be elected to be member of the State Election Commission. The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia publishes the announcement for election of the new SEC composition, i.e. President, Vice President and members of the SEC in the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia and in daily newspapers within 30 days prior to the expired term of the Commis-

31 Over 100,000 citizens do not have documents for voting in elections, the SEC proposed amendments to the Electoral Code, the Assembly on the move" Telma, March 04, 2024. Accessed at: <https://telma.com.mk/2024/03/04/nad-100-000-gragani-nemaat-dokumenti-za-glasane-na-izbori-sobranieto-na-poteg-otkako-dik-predlozhi-izmeni-na-izborniot-zakonik/> (last visit: 27 March 2024)

32 "SEC: Citizens who turn 18 between the two rounds of the presidential election on May 8 will only be able to vote for the election of MPs" 360 degrees, March 15, 2024. Accessed at: <https://360stepeni.mk/dik-graganite-shto-ke-napolnat-18-godini-pomegu-dvata-kruga-na-pretседателските-izbori-na-8-maj-ke-mozhe-da-glasaat-samo-za-izbor-na-pratenitsi/> (last visit: 26 March 2024)

33 "Deadline to register candidate lists for parliamentary elections ends today, the Voter List is also closed" 360 stepeni, 2 April 2024. Accessed at: <https://360stepeni.mk/deneska-zavrshuva-rokot-za-prijavuvane-na-listite-za-pratenitsi-se-zakluchuva-i-izbirachkiot-spisok/> (last visit: 2 April 2024)

sion. The advertisement lasts for eight days from the date of publication in the Official Gazette.

The procedure applied to elect members has remained unchanged. It is prepared and implemented by the Committee on Election and Appointment Issues within the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. The Committee drafts a proposal for a list of registered candidates and submits it to the Assembly. Of the candidates on the list, the opposition proposes a president and two members, while the ruling parties propose a vice-president and three members. All members are elected by a two-thirds majority of the total number of MPs.

Several articles governing the election, term and work of the State Election Commission were changed with the interventions made to the Electoral Code in September 2021. Changes to Article 26 stipulate that the term of the members of the Commission is increased to five years as of the day of election. Furthermore, changes made in Article 27, 29 and 30 stipulate for the first time the process of reorganizing the Commission's composition if the Government changes, as well as the election of new members and the Secretary General.³⁴

Amendments to the Electoral Code of this year oblige the State Election Commission to establish a Center for continuous electoral education as a separate organizational unit in its secretariat, headed by a state adviser at B1 level³⁵, who reports to the Commission and the Secretary General. The Center will provide continuous training to the election administration, voters, election participants, media, and election observers, and will conduct various research studies and analysis which are needed and requested by the SEC.³⁶

Party Finance

The Law on Party Finance has not been amended in the last few years. The provisions on specification of assets and party finance (movable and immovable property), the total funds for annual party finance in the amount of 0.15% of the total source revenues of the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, the private

34 Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, Law Amending the Electoral Code 218/2021

35 According to Article 24 of the Law on Administrative Servants, a civil servant of B1 category is a managerial administrative servant of level one, who fulfills the requirements, i.e. at least two years of managerial position in the public sector, or, at least three years of managerial position in the private sector.

36 Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, Law Amending the Electoral Code 58/2024

sources of funding, the amount of individual donations that may not exceed the amount of 60 average salaries as a donation from legal entities and 30 net average salaries as a donation from individuals, still remain valid. With the latest amendments to the Electoral Code in March 2024, a new paragraph was added to Article 83 regulating the individual donations that political parties receive for election campaigns. That is, the cumulative amount on the election campaign bank account from the same natural person must not exceed 3,000 euros in denar counter value or 30,000 Euros in denar counter value from the same legal entity.

Party finance in the amount of 30% that is provided from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia is still equally distributed to all political parties that won at least 1% of the total number of votes at the last parliamentary or local elections. 70% of the funds are allocated to political parties according to the number of elected MPs in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia at the last parliamentary elections and according to the number of elected councilors at the last local elections.

Article 26 of the Law on Party Finance stipulates that the State Audit Office oversees the party finance. This Article also stipulates that parties have only one bank account, and if funds are provided from commercial bank loan, in addition to the basic bank account, parties may have another special bank account for party finance secured from a loan. Also, a political party can transfer funds on/to these accounts, while party research-analytical centers have a separate account. The amount of 280,000 Euro in denar counter value from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia is stipulated for annual funding of the Research-analytical centers of political parties which are established in accordance with the law as part of the party's internal organization.³⁷

Pursuant to the amended law in 2018, political parties have an obligation to submit a financial report on the party's material-financial operations, which also includes the financial operations on the party's account, i.e. accounts. An additional part of the financial report, that is, items "sponsorship" and "loan" are also stipulated in the amendments. In addition, amendments stipulate that the funds intended for party finance will be paid from the Budget based on possibilities, but no later than March 1 of each current year.

37 Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia, Law Amending the Law on Party Finance, 140/2018

Public media

The ban imposed with the amendments to the Electoral Code in 2018 that from the day of announcing the elections until the election campaign start, all broadcasters, print media and electronic media (portals) may not broadcast, i.e. publish paid political advertising, except for advertisements and announcements aimed for collecting signatures in support of the candidacy of a group of voters, will remain valid also for this election cycle. Any broadcasting, i.e. publishing of announcements for collecting signatures in support of the candidacies is done in marked advertising blocks of the allowed advertising time per real hour. The amendments to the Electoral Code from March 2024, provide for a restriction in the promotion of candidates, i.e., once the candidate lists are confirmed and until the start of the election campaign, election contestants have the right to organize one public event to promote their confirmed lists of candidate/s and electoral programs. Accordingly, Article 69-a prohibits the parties to spend the funds allocated for the election campaign in the previously mentioned period.

Broadcasters covering elections, in the first and second round of election campaign, may broadcast a total of nine minutes and thirty seconds per real hour of program that is solely intended for paid political advertising. Of these nine and a half minutes, a total of four minutes may be allocated to the two biggest ruling parties, four minutes for the two biggest oppositional parties, one minute for political parties in the Assembly that did not win sufficient number of seats at the last election to establish a parliamentary group, as well as thirty seconds for political parties not represented in the Assembly. Given that double elections are held this year, there is a possibility that political parties are advertised for a total of 19 minutes per hour. Earlier, this was the case with the electoral campaign for the 2014 double elections when the political parties agreed on a limit of 15 minutes promotion per hour.³⁸

Pursuant to the Electoral Code changes from 2021, instead of the Ministry of Finance, the duty to reimburse invoice-based costs to broadcasters, printed and electronic media for paid political advertising is delegated to the State Election Commission. Along with an invoice, media are required to submit a media plan as well as Report on provided services that are confirmed both by broadcasters, printed media and electronic media (portals) and the election participants themselves.

38 "2024 Elections: A party propaganda program of epic proportions", Prizma, 8 February 2024. Accessed at: <https://prizma.mk/izbori-2024-partisko-epp-od-epski-razmeri/> (last visit: 26 March 2024)

With the latest amendments to the Electoral Code, the public broadcasting service, as well as the television stations that broadcast paid political advertising, have the obligation to broadcast election-related content in a format accessible to persons with disabilities, i.e. using sign language, subtitles, tone description or other tools to ensure accessibility, at least once, in the period from 16:00 to 24:00 hrs. Furthermore, Article 75 stipulates an obligation for service providers, prior to the start of the election campaign, to submit a schedule to the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Services (AAVMS) of the edition of news and other content that will be broadcast in a format accessible to persons with disabilities, that will be published by the AAVMS on its website.



**History of the presidential
elections in the Republic
of North Macedonia
(1991 – 2019)**

1. History of the presidential elections in the Republic of North Macedonia (1991 – 2019)

The first president of independent Macedonia was Kiro Gligorov, elected by secret ballot in the Macedonian Parliament on January 27, 1991, with 114 votes in favor. All subsequent presidents were elected at general and direct elections. In the first such election in 1994, the then President Gligorov won his second consecutive term. Gligorov is the only president so far who managed to win the first election round. In the second general and direct elections in 1999, six candidates joined the presidential race, and the victory in the second round was taken by VMRO-DPMNE's candidate, Boris Trajkovski. He held the office of President until his tragic death in 2004. At the early presidential elections in 2004, SDSM candidate Branko Crvenkovski was elected the third President of the Republic of Macedonia. In the fourth presidential elections in 2009, Gjorge Ivanov won his first term and secured his second term in the 2014 elections when he defeated the incumbent President Stevo Pendarovski in the second round.

More information on the history of presidential elections since independence to date can be found in the Manual for Presidential Elections in the Republic of North Macedonia 2019.³⁹



Stevo Pendarovski, Fifth President of the Republic of North Macedonia (2019-2024)

The incumbent President of the Republic, Stevo Pendarovski, through a second attempt, managed to win the post in the presidential cabinet after winning the sixth two-round presidential election. In the presidential race in 2019, three candidates participated: Stevo Pendarovski, SDSM candidate with the support of DUI, Gordana Siljanovska Davkova, candidate of VMRO-DPMNE, and Blerim Reka, who ran as an independent candidate, but was supported by the Alliance for Albanians and BESA.

In the first election round on April 21, 2019, the right to vote was exercised by 753,556 citizens, i.e.

³⁹ Manual for Presidential Elections in the Republic of North Macedonia 2019, second supplemented edition. KAS and IDSCS, 2019. page 17-22. https://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2019_The_Republic_of_Macedonia_s_2019_Presidential_Elections_Handbook_ENG.pdf (last visit: 28 March 2024)

41.68% of all registered voters. After counting the votes, Pendarovski won 42.81% of the votes, i.e. 322,581 votes, Siljanovska Davkova won 318,341 votes i.e. 42.25% of the votes and candidate Blerim Reka won 79,888 votes or 10.60% of the total votes. In the second round held on 5 May 2019, the candidates supported by SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE secured a place. The winner of the elections in the second round was the incumbent President, Stevo Pendarovski, with 51.65% of the votes (435.656 votes), while his opponent, Gordana Siljanovska Davkova, won 44.75% of the votes (377.446 votes). The turnout of citizens in the second election round was 46.65%, i.e. 843.508 voters.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ North Macedonia, Presidential Elections, 21 April and 5 May 2019: Final Report of the ODIHR Monitoring Mission, 21 August 2019. Accessed at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/3/428867_0.pdf (last visit: 27 March 2024)



2

Macedonian Electoral System for Presidential Elections

2. Macedonian Electoral System for Presidential Elections

The President of the Republic is elected at general and direct elections, by secret ballot, with a 5-year term and right to be reelected twice. The election of the President is governed by the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Electoral Code. Presidential elections are administered on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia and in its diplomatic and consular missions that comprise one electoral district under the majority electoral system. Every Macedonian citizen who has reached the age of 40 on Election Day and has been a resident of the country for at least ten in the last 15 years has the right to be elected. A candidate for president can be nominated by at least 10,000 voters or at least 30 MPs.⁴¹

The election of the President is almost always administered in two election rounds. In the first round, the winner is the candidate who will win a majority (50%+1 voter) of the total number of registered voters in the Voter List. If neither candidate reaches the required majority, a second round of voting is administered within 14 days, which includes the two candidates that won most of the votes in the first round. In the second round, the candidate who won a majority of the total number of votes will be elected, whereby at least 40% of the registered voters are required to exercise their right to vote. If neither candidate fulfils both conditions, the entire election procedure is repeated.⁴²

The number of polling stations in the country for the presidential elections this year is 3480, while 31 polling stations are provided for out-of-country voting in the diplomatic and consular missions. Diaspora voting is administered only in the representative offices where at least ten Macedonian citizens applied to vote.⁴³ The election campaign for the election of the President begins 20 days before Election Day and lasts up to one day before elections. The campaign for the 2024 presidential elections begins on April 4 at 00:00 and ends on April 22 at 24:00 hrs., when the election silence actually begins.⁴⁴

41 Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no.52/1991, as amended by Amendments I-XXXVI.

42 Ibid.

43 "A total of 2,571 citizens abroad will be able to vote in the presidential elections" Radio Free Europe, 27 March 2024. Accessed at <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/32880067.html> (last visit: 28 March 2024)

44 "The election campaign for the presidential elections from 4 to 22 April, for the parliamentary elections from 18 April to 6 May. Accessed at: <https://a1on.mk/macedonia/izbornata-kampanja-za-pretsedatelskite-izbori-od-4-do-22-april-za-parlamentarnite-od-18-april-do-6-maj/> (last visit: 28 March 2024)

By assuming office, the President is given a series of functions and exclusive rights. The President is granted a mandate to represent the Republic at home and abroad, to act as the supreme commander of the armed forces, to grant the mandate for the composition of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, to appoint and recall ambassadors and MPs abroad, to receive the credentials of foreign diplomatic representatives in the country, to propose two judges of the Constitutional Court, two members of the Republic Judicial Council, three members of the Security Council, and to appoint and dismiss other holders of state and public offices determined by the Constitution and laws. In addition, the President awards decorations and recognitions, grants pardons in accordance with the law and performs other functions that are specified in the Constitution of the state. The office of President of the Republic is incompatible with another public, political or professional function. The President enjoys immunity in the exercise of his office, but if the President violates the Constitution and the laws, s/he must be held accountable. The procedure for determining such responsibility is initiated at the Assembly by a two-thirds majority vote of the total number of MPs. The responsibility of the President is decided by the Constitutional Court by a two-thirds majority vote of the total number of judges.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, the State Election Commission (SEC) is responsible for the legality, preparation and administering of elections, but also for supervising the work of the electoral management bodies. The competences of the SEC also include the publication of the Voters List, which should be open for public inspection to citizens within 15 days from the date of the announcement of the elections. The public inspection of the Voter List lasts 20 days. In addition to the Commission and authorized representatives of the list submitters, all domestic and foreign civil society organizations holding SEC accreditation have the right to observe the elections.

More information regarding the electoral system and campaign, the role of public media, as well as the mandate of the President can be found in the Manual for Presidential Elections in the Republic of North Macedonia 2019.⁴⁵

45 Manual for presidential elections in the Republic of North Macedonia 2019, second supplemented edition. KAS and IDSCS, 2019. page 23-36. Accessed at: https://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2019_The_Republic_of_Macedonia_s_2019_Presidential_Elections_Handbook_ENG.pdf (last visit: 28 March 2024)



3

Participants in the presidential elections 2024

3. Participants in the presidential elections 2024⁴⁶

Stevo Pendarovski



Stevo Pendarovski is the current President of the Republic of North Macedonia, elected at the 2019 presidential elections. Prior to taking office, he was a professor at the Faculty of Political Science at the American College in Skopje (UACS), where he taught the following subjects: International Security, International Relations, Introduction to Politics, Globalization, Geopolitics, US Foreign Policy, EU Foreign and Security Policy and Small States in World Politics. He graduated in 1987 from the Faculty of Law at the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje, and completed his master’s and doctoral studies at the Institute for Sociological and Political-Legal Research in Skopje. This is the third presidential candidacy of Pendarovski, who lost to Gjorge Ivanov in the second round of voting in the 2014 presidential election. He ran as a joint candidate of SDSM, DUI and 29 other political parties in the 2019 presidential elections.⁴⁷

He holds a master’s degree in “New Geopolitics of the Republic of Macedonia: Contradictions of the Communist and Transitional Matrices”, and a doctoral degree on the topic “Foreign and Security Policy of the EU and Small States: Framework of National Discourse”.⁴⁸

In the period 2001-2004, Stevo Pendarovski was a national security adviser in the Cabinet of President Boris Trajkovski, and in the period 2005-2009 he served as a foreign policy adviser in the Cabinet of President Branko Crvenkovski. He was also President of the State Election Commission, in the period 2004 – 2005. Previously, from 1998 to 2001, he worked as an Assistant minister at the Ministry of Interior

46 Candidates are ranked according to the established single list of candidates for President of the Republic of North Macedonia by the State Election Commission, that was adopted by drawing lots on 25.3.2024. The photographs of the candidates are taken from their official Facebook profiles.

47 Manual for presidential elections 2019. Accessed at: https://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2019_The_Republic_of_Macedonia_s_2019_Presidential_Elections_Handbook_ENG.pdf (last visit: 20.3.2024).

48 Handbook for Presidential Elections 2014. Accessed: https://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2019_The_Republic_of_Macedonia_s_2019_Presidential_Elections_Handbook_ENG.pdf (last visit: 4.3.2019).

and as head of the Analytical and Research Directorate within the Ministry. At the 2016 parliamentary elections, Stevo Pendarovski was elected MP in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, and in November 2017 he was appointed as national coordinator for the preparations in the Republic of North Macedonia for NATO membership.⁴⁹

He is the author of several books and academic papers published in the country and beyond, and has participated in numerous academic conferences, public debates and discussions.

In the 2024 presidential elections, he will run as a candidate of the SDSM-led coalition.⁵⁰

Stevo Pendarovski was born on April 3, 1963 in Skopje. He is married and has one child.

Gordana Siljanovska Davkova



Gordana Siljanovska Davkova is a retired full Professor of Constitutional Law and Political System at the Faculty of Law "Iustinianus Primus" at the University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. She completed her primary and secondary education in Skopje, after which she continued her education at the Faculty of Law, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. She completed her undergraduate studies in 1978, and continued her education with a master's degree at the same faculty. In 1994, she completed her doctoral studies *Cum laude* at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana, Republic of Slovenia. In 1994, she was elected as Assistant Professor, in 1999 as Associate Professor, and in 2004 as full-time Professor at the Department of Constitutional Law and Political System at the Faculty of Law in Skopje.

49 Website of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia. Accessed at: <https://pretsedatel.mk/biografija-na-pretsedatelot/> (last visit: 21.3.2024).

50 Website of SDSM. Accessed at: СДСМ - Социјалдемократски Сојуз на Македонија (sds.org.mk) (last visit: 26.3.2024).

Professor Siljanoska Davkova is the author and co-author of more than 200 titles in the field of law, political system and constitutional law. In 2016, students voted her as the most inspiring professor at the Faculty of Law. She is the founder of clinical (practical) legal education in the Republic of Macedonia. She was the Head of the Institute of Legal and Legal-Political Sciences and a member of the Dean's Office, and Head of the Department of Constitutional Law and Political System. She is one of the founders of political studies and political science in the country.

In her social engagement, she was a member of the Constitutional Committee in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia (1991 – 1992); Minister without Portfolio in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia (1992 – 1994); President of the Coordinating Body for Cooperation with CEELI (Central and Eastern European Legal Initiative) founded by the American Bar Association (ABA) in 1992-1994; founder and member of the First Macedonian Council of the European Movement; President of the Macedonian National Committee for Gender Equality (1999 – 2002); President of the Women's Lobby, Working Group on Gender Issues (2002 – 2004); President of the Civil Movement of Macedonia (2004 – 2005); and one of the founders of the Euro-Balkan Institute.

In 1991, she was a member of the expert group of the Geneva Conference on the former Yugoslavia. As of 1994, she was one of UNDP's gender experts, and in 1998 a UN electoral expert. She was a member of the Steering Committee for Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) of the Council of Europe (1996 – 2002). She has been a member of the International Association for Constitutional Law since 1999 until nowadays. From 2002 to 2023 she was a member of the Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, Council of Europe, Strasbourg where she was also Vice-President (2004 – 2012). In the period 2008 – 2016, she represented the Republic of Macedonia in the Venice Commission. She has received many awards, including for her contribution to the rule of law from the OSCE Mission to Skopje and a medal for her work on gender equality from the Union of Women of Macedonia. In 2019, she was a candidate in the presidential elections supported by VMRO-DPMNE and the Coalition. In the second round of elections, her opponent Stevo Pendarovski was elected president.⁵¹

In the early parliamentary elections in 2020, Siljanovska Davkova was the candidate list leader for MPs of VMRO-DPMNE and the Coalition in electoral district 1. As an independent MP within the parliamentary group of VMRO-DPMNE and the Coalition,

51 Manual for presidential elections in 2019. Accessed at: https://izbornaarhiva.mk/dokumentacija/priracnici/Belegexemplar_2019_The_Republic_of_Macedonia_s_2019_Presidential_Elections_Handbook_ENG.pdf (last visit: 20.3.2024).

she was elected Chairwoman of the Committee on Equality between Women and Men, a member of the Political System Committee and the Education Committee, as well as of the National Council for European Integration. She is also a member of the Steering Committee for Cooperation with the Swedish Parliament and the Committee for Cooperation with the Israeli Parliament. She is a deputy member of the Committee on European Affairs and the OSCE delegation.

In the 2024 presidential elections, she will run as a candidate of VMRO-DPMNE and the Coalition.⁵²

Gordana Siljanovska Davkova was born on May 11, 1953 in Ohrid. She is married and has two children.⁵³

Stevcho Jakimovski



Stevcho Jakimovski graduated from the Faculty of Economics in Skopje in 1987. In 1988, he was a volunteer journalist in the sports editorial office of Radio Skopje, and then in the information and political editorial office of the second program of Radio Skopje.

From October 1988 to May 1990, he was an expert-political worker at the Presidency of the Union of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia. In 1992, he became director of the tour agency “Katlanovo-Tours” – Skopje.

In September 2000, he was elected to be Mayor of the Municipality of Karposh, and in November 2003 as Minister of Economy in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, and from 2004 to 2006 he was Minister of Labor and Social Policy.

In April 2009, he won the local elections and for the second time became mayor of the Municipality of Karposh. Four years later, in March 2013, he run independently in the elections and won the trust of the citizens of Karposh for the third time.

52 Website of VMRO-DPMNE. Accessed at: VMRO-DPMNE – VMRO-DPMNE (vmro-dpmne.org.mk) (accessed: 26.3.2024).

53 Curriculum Vitae; website of the Faculty of Law “Iustinian Primus” Skopje; Accessed at: <http://pf.ukim.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/C.V.-GORDANA-SILJANOVSKA-DAVKOVA-2c-2016.pdf> (last visit: 21.3.2024).

In September 2013, he founded the political party Civic Option for Macedonia – GROM, and was elected its president. GROM has been part of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia since 2014. In October 2021, in the local elections, Jakimovski ran as a candidate for mayor of GROM and won the citizens' trust for the fourth time.

At the presidential elections in 2024, he will run as a candidate of the coalition led by the Civic Option for Macedonia – GROM.⁵⁴

Stevcho Jakimovski was born on 27.8.1960 in Kriva Palanka. He is married and father of two children.⁵⁵

Bujar Osmani



Bujar Osmani graduated from the Medical Faculty in Skopje in 2004. He completed part of his specialization in London, United Kingdom, in the period 2006 – 2007, while from 2012 he acquired the title of specialist surgeon. In 2014 he started his doctoral studies at the School of Doctoral Studies at the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje, where he received his doctorate in July 2018.

In 2008, he was appointed Minister of Health of the Republic of Macedonia and held this function until 2011. In 2011, he was a specialist surgeon at the University Clinic for Digestive Surgery in Skopje. The same year, the Democratic Union for Integration appointed him a Secretary for Public Communication of the party presidency.

From 2017 to July 2020, he served as Deputy Prime Minister in charge of European Affairs. As Head of the Secretariat for European Affairs, Osmani also served as the National Coordinator for the allocation of foreign assistance and IPA funds in the country.

54 Website of GROM. Accessed at: Мојот потпис за Стевчо Јакимовски – Граѓанска Опција за Македонија (grom.mk) (last visit: 26.3.2024).

55 Website of the Municipality of Karposh. Accessed at : <https://karposh.gov.mk/Mayor/> (last visit: 15.3.2024).

From 2018 to July 2020, he was appointed Head of State Delegation and Chief Negotiator with the European Union.

Osmani was a permanent member of the Government Crisis Headquarters for dealing with COVID-19, and in the first half of 2020 he was appointed Chief Coordinator of the local crisis headquarters and the Crisis Headquarters of the City of Skopje.

On 30 August 2020, Bujar Osmani was elected Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia.

In the 2024 presidential elections, he will run as a candidate of the DUI-led coalition.⁵⁶

Bujar Osmani was born on September 11, 1979 in Skopje. He is married and has three children.⁵⁷

Biljana Vankovska Cvetkovska



Biljana Vankovska Cvetkovska is a doctor of law and a full-time professor at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje. She is the Head of the Center for Global Change. She has been a representative of the Institute for Security, Defense and Peace at the Faculty of Philosophy in the OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions since 2017. She was a member of the executive board of the Committee on Society and the Armed Forces within the International Political Science Association (IPSA). She was a representative of the Republic of Macedonia, that is, of the Institute for Security, Defense and Peace in the Consortium of Military Academies and Security Institutes within the Partnership for Peace (from its establishment in 1999 to 2003).

56 Website of the Democratic Union for Integration. Accessed at: Bujar Osmani: Të përqëndrohemi në heqjen e barrierave që na mbajnë jashtë rrugës së progresit e zhvillimit të shekullit XXI - Bashkimi Demokratik Për Integrim (bdi.mk) (last visit: 25.3.2024).

57 Website of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. Accessed at: <https://vlada.mk/minister/BujarOsmani> (last visit: 15.3.2024).

She is a member of the editorial boards of several renowned scientific journals in various countries. She is a member of numerous world academic associations, and is a member of several initiatives related to global governance and disarmament in the 21st century.

She published the following textbooks: “Defence and the Law”, “Political System” (two editions), “European Institutions” (two editions), “International Security” and “Transitional Justice”. She was a member of the Inter-ministerial expert group for the preparation of the Report on the compatibility of the country’s legislation with the standards and requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In her public engagement, Vankovska was a public advocate of the REKOM Initiative in the Republic of Macedonia. She was vice president of the Civic Movement of Macedonia in 2004 – 2005, and especially active in the referendum campaign for the Law on Municipal Borders of 2004. She was one of the founders of the “Professor’s Plenum”, active in the protests against the restriction of the right to abortion, the protests against the Prespa Agreement and the change of the Constitution, etc.

In the 2024 presidential elections, she will run as a candidate of Levica.

Biljana Vankovska Cvetkovska was born on 14 November 1959 in Skopje and is mother of three children⁵⁸.

Arben Taravari



Arben Taravari is a neurologist with many years of experience at the University Clinic of Neurology in Skopje. In 1998 he graduated from the Medical Faculty at the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius”, and in 2006 completed a specialization in neurology at the University Clinic of Neurology. He completed the second specialization in family medicine at the Faculty of Medicine, University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in 2011. He is president of the board of the University Clinic of Neurology, as well as member of the board of the medical journal *Medicus* and *Vox Medici*.

⁵⁸ Website of the party Levica. Accessed at: <https://levica.mk/pretsedatelski-kandidat-2024/> (last visit: 15.3.2024).

He published several books and academic papers including: “Migraines, headaches and painful syndromes” (2016), “Practicum of Neurology” (2014), and his doctoral dissertation is on “Clinical and genetic findings in patients with idiopathic Parkinson’s disease” (2011).

Taravari’s recent political career began with the Alliance for Albanians in 2016, led by the President Zijadin Sela, where Taravari was elected Secretary General. In the 2016 parliamentary elections, the Alliance for Albanians won three parliamentary seats, including that of Taravari.

On 1 June 2017, Taravari was appointed Minister of Health in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, a post he held until 31.10.2017.

Dr. Arben Taravari took the mayoral position in Gostivar in 2017, after winning the local elections by defeating the then incumbent mayor of DUI Nevzat Bejta⁵⁹ In 2021, after completing his first term in office, Taravari ran again as a candidate of the Alliance for Albania and won his second term as mayor of Gostivar.⁶⁰

After the appointment of Taravari by the party’s Central Assembly as acting party president in December 2022, at the third extraordinary Congress of the party Alliance for Albanians, Taravari was elected party president.⁶¹

In February 2024, Taravari announced the candidacy for president of the country on the proposal of the AA Presidency, with the support of the Albanian opposition parties. The candidacy comes at a time of intra-party tensions in the Alliance for Albanians.⁶²

In the 2024 presidential elections, he will run as a candidate of the “VREDI” coalition.⁶³

Arben Taravari was born on April 9, 1973 in Gostivar. He is married and father of two children.⁶⁴

59 Website of the Municipality of Gostivar. Accessed at: <https://gostivari.gov.mk/dr-arben-taravari/> (last visit: 15.3.2024).

60 Manual for local elections in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2021. Accessed: https://izbornaarhiva.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/belegexemplar_2021_the_republic_of_north_macedonias_2021_local_elections_handbook_eng_version-1.pdf (last visit: 25.3.2024).

61 Website of Alliance for Albanians. Accessed at: Then, the taravari - the alliance for the Albanians (aleanca.mk) (last visit: 26.3.2024).

62 Arben Taravari is presidential candidate of the Albanian opposition (slobodnaevropa.mk) (last visit: 26.3.2024).

63 Website of Alternativa. Accessed at: <https://alternativa.org.mk> (last visit: 26.3.2024).

64 Website of Vistinomer. Accessed at: <https://vistinomer.mk/arben-taravari-gradonachalnik-na-gostivar/> (last visit: 15.3.2024).

Maksim Dimitrievski



Maksim Dimitrievski graduated from the Faculty of Law in Skopje. He completed his master studies in 202 on the topic “The role of local self-government in emergency and crisis situation, under conditions of epidemic, with focus on the Municipality of Kumanovo”. He has many years of work experience as a private entrepreneur.

He began his political career as a young activist of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia. In 2008, he became part of the Council of the Municipality of Kumanovo, and later President of the Council from 2012 to 2016. He continued his political career as an MP in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and Chairman of the Committee on Defense and Security.

At the local elections in October 2017, he became mayor of the Municipality of Kumanovo. After completing his first term, he ran for a second time, but as an independent candidate, and due to the decision to run independently in the local elections in 2021, he was excluded from the SDSM party. Maksim Dimitrievski won the local elections in Kumanovo and became mayor of the Municipality of Kumanovo for the second time with a mandate from 2021 to 2025.⁶⁵ In October 2024, he established the new political party “Dvizenje ZNAM – Za nasa Makedonija” and at the same time was elected party leader.

In the 2024 presidential elections, he will run as a candidate of the “Dvizenje ZNAM-Za nasa Makedonija”.⁶⁶

Maksim Dimitrievski was born on 29 November 1975 in Kumanovo. He is married and father of three children.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Manual for local elections in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2021. Accessed at: https://izbornaarhiva.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/belegexemplar_2021_the_republic_of_north_macedonias_2021_local_elections_handbook_eng_version-1.pdf (last visit: 25.3.2024).

⁶⁶ Website of Dvizenje ZNAM- Za nasa Makedonija. Accessed at: Движење ЗНАМ - За наша Македонија - Движење ЗНАМ - За наша Македонија (dvizenjeznam.org.mk) (last visit:25.3.2024).

⁶⁷ Website of the Municipality of Kumanovo. Accessed at: <https://kumanovo.gov.mk/gradonacalnik/> (last visit: 15.3.2024).

