



E-Invoicing: From Regulatory Requirement to Strategic Opportunity

Lessons from Serbia and the Path Forward for North Macedonia

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The introduction of e-invoicing marks a pivotal moment in the digital transformation of the Southeast European economy. In both North Macedonia and Serbia, the transition to electronic invoicing is reshaping the relationship between businesses, the state, and financial institutions. While the initial focus has understandably been on compliance and technical implementation, the broader implications of e-invoicing deserve closer attention, particularly its potential to drive efficiency, legal certainty, and sustainable economic growth.

Serbia offers a valuable reference point. As one of the first countries in the region to fully implement a mandatory e-invoicing system for both B2B and B2G transactions, Serbia has already moved beyond the implementation phase and into optimization. The Serbian experience demonstrates that, once initial operational challenges are addressed, e-invoicing significantly improves transparency, reduces administrative burdens, and strengthens tax discipline. For many companies, what initially appeared as a regulatory obligation has evolved into an integral part of their digital and financial infrastructure, and will never go back to paper invoicing.

North Macedonia is now entering a similar phase of systemic transformation. The introduction of e-invoicing should be viewed not as an isolated regulatory reform, but as part of a broader agenda aimed at modernizing public administration, improving the business climate, and aligning with European digital standards. In this context, e-invoicing represents a key building block for a more predictable and transparent economic environment, one that is particularly attractive to foreign investors and regional operators.

From a legal perspective, e-invoicing substantially enhances transactional certainty in both jurisdictions. Digitally issued and archived invoices within a regulated framework reduce disputes related to authenticity, delivery, and timing. Standardized data formats and audit trails provide stronger evidentiary value in tax audits, commercial disputes, and enforcement proceedings. In markets where legal certainty is often cited as a critical investment consideration, this is a significant step forward.

For businesses operating in Macedonia and Serbia, especially those engaged in cross-border trade, the harmonization of invoicing practices brings additional advantages. Comparable systems, aligned processes, and clearer compliance expectations reduce friction in regional operations and support more efficient supply chains. This regional convergence is particularly relevant for companies active across the Western Balkans, where operational consistency is increasingly a competitive factor.

Beyond legal compliance, e-invoicing delivers tangible operational and financial benefits. Automation of invoicing and accounting processes reduces manual errors, lowers administrative costs, and accelerates payment cycles. Improved cash-flow visibility and predictability are especially important for small and medium-sized enterprises, which form the backbone of both economies. Over time, these efficiencies contribute directly to business growth and resilience.

At the macroeconomic level, the impact is equally significant. E-invoicing strengthens fiscal transparency and helps reduce the grey economy by enabling real-time or near-real-time oversight of transactions. Serbia's experience shows that improved compliance can be achieved without imposing disproportionate burdens on compliant businesses. For Macedonia, this represents an opportunity to enhance public revenue collection while simultaneously improving trust between the private sector and public institutions.

Another critical dimension is data security and fraud prevention. Properly regulated e-invoicing systems provide higher levels of protection than traditional paper-based or unstructured digital invoicing. Authentication mechanisms, controlled access, and system-based validations significantly reduce the risks of invoice fraud, manipulation, and data loss. In an environment of increasing cyber risks, this added security is a material benefit for businesses and financial institutions alike.

To fully realize these advantages, however, a proactive and strategic approach is essential. Companies should treat e-invoicing as a cross-functional project involving legal, finance, IT, and management teams. Early alignment of contracts, internal policies, and digital systems allows businesses not only to comply with the law, but to extract long-term value from the new framework.

In conclusion, the experience of Serbia and the ongoing implementation in North Macedonia clearly demonstrate that e-invoicing is far more than a regulatory formality. It is a strategic instrument that can improve legal certainty, operational efficiency, and economic transparency across the region. Businesses that recognize e-invoicing as an opportunity rather than merely an obligation will be better positioned to compete, grow, and adapt in an increasingly digital economy.

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