

**NGO ROUNDTABLE ON
“INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN
THE FYR OF MACEDONIA”
FIRST MEETING**

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Director: Marc Weller

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The restoration of peace and stability in the Balkans has become one of the key occupations of European foreign policy. While this aim will retain a high priority, one can however already observe a lessening of interest and involvement by the international community in this region. Less than two years after the dramatic events that culminated in NATO's military campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, there is talk of donor fatigue and a number of international programmes are in danger of being wound down. There is a growing sense that the citizens of the Balkan states will need to take their destiny into their own hands and generate the kinds of democratic and ethnically inclusive structures that will assist in maintaining stability in the longer term. Broad civil society initiatives, supported by the Stability Pact for South East Europe and other sources of funding, now need to be filled with life. Concrete projects need to be generated that explicitly enhance multi-ethnic cooperation and foster civic responsibility. And, crucially, ownership of these projects must lie with local civil society groups, to ensure that these new patterns of practice take root in the respective societies.

The European Centre for Minority Issues, a German-Danish action-oriented centre of expertise in relation to ethno-political conflict and its resolution, has therefore launched a multi-layered civil society program on the Balkans. This initiative covers at present Kosovo, the FYR of Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. A key element is close cooperation with local partners whose ownership of these projects increases over time. The project of an *NGO Roundtable on Inter-Ethnic Relations in the FYR of Macedonia* seeks to empower local NGOs to generate civil society projects of high quality. The project expressly invites these organisations to recognise their role to represent interests, not ethnic groups. The project is organised in close cooperation with our local partner, the Centre for Refugees and Forced Migration Studies (CRFMS) at the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research (ISPJR) at Sts. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje. Mr Sunoor Verma, international consultant on project management at CRFMS, has been appointed ECMI Regional Representative for the FYR of Macedonia.

Given the very large number of NGOs in the FYR of Macedonia, not all of which are equally active, the project will start with some 30 established NGOs who will adopt a

code of best practice to which others will be invited to subscribe. They will engage in collaborative efforts to generate sustainable and inclusive projects that will have an impact on Macedonian society. These projects will then be presented to international funding bodies. Advice and assistance in executing projects may also be offered once funding has been obtained. Moreover, the impact of this initiative can be broadened by linking up to NGO networking initiatives in other Balkan states.

This project was generated through the tireless efforts of ECMI Research Associate Farimah Daftary and developed in close cooperation with Dr Mirjana Najčevská, Director of the Center for Human Rights and the CRFMS at the ISPJR, and also of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee. The launch of the project was made possible through generous grants from the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Secretariat for Peace and Stability / FRESTA) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ECMI is very thankful for this support. We would also like to thank all the international experts who participated in the Flensburg meeting as well as Ms Iskra Evrosimovska, International Center for Preventive Action and Conflict Resolution (Skopje), for helping with the preparations, and Mr Troels Rasmussen, Danish Institute for Border Region Research (Aabenraa), for a concise overview of 200 years of Danish-German relations and current minority arrangements in the border region. Last but not least, we are most grateful to ECMI Board members Amb Tore Bøgh, former head of various OSCE missions to the region, whose experience and true dedication to the region proved an invaluable stimulant, as well as Mr Hans-Peter Furrer from the Council of Europe.

This report was prepared by ECMI Research Associate Farimah Daftary with editing assistance by Mr Sunoor Verma. The participants of the NGO Roundtable have not had an opportunity to review this report which therefore is the responsibility of ECMI alone.

Marc Weller, ECMI Director
Flensburg, 5 February 2001

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

In this report we refer to the "FYR of Macedonia", matching present official terminology while at the same time displaying some sensitivity to the region.

We have tried to use consistently throughout this report the term "Macedonian" to refer to any citizen of the FYR of Macedonia. In contrast, "ethnic Macedonian" specifically refers to that person's ethnicity. Similarly, we have used "ethnic Albanian" to refer to Macedonian citizens of Albanian ethnicity, etc. In the same way, "Macedonian NGO" refers not to an NGO with ethnic Macedonian members but to any NGO based in the country.

Finally, participants in the discussion are not referred to by name specifically as they did not have the opportunity to review this report beforehand. We therefore refer to "Macedonian participants" to denote any participant from an NGO from the FYR of Macedonia, regardless of ethnicity, and to "international experts" to denote all other participants in the Roundtable. Representatives of international organisations such as the OSCE or the Council of Europe are specifically referred to as the "OSCE representative" or the "Council of Europe representative".

MAP OF THE FYR OF MACEDONIA



ETHNIC COMPOSITION¹

(total population: 1.95 million)

Ethnic Group	% of Population
Macedonian	66.5
Albanian	22.9
Turkish	4.0
Romani	2.0 ²
Other (Serbian, Vlach, etc.)	4.6
Total	100

¹ These statistics are based on the 1994 Census of the Population, Households, Dwellings and Agricultural Holdings. As elsewhere in the region, statistics on ethnic origin are highly sensitive and disputed. It must be mentioned here that the Albanian community disputes official figures, boycotting the 1991 census and partially boycotting the 1994 census. Ethnic Albanians claim to make up 30 % of the population. The community is enlarged by the arrival of Albanians from Kosovo, many of which have been ineligible for Macedonian citizenship.

² Officially, there are about 44,000 Roma but the actual size of the Roma community is estimated to be around 200,000 (10.3%) by the London-based human rights organisation Minority Rights Group International. Many Roma tend to identify with other ethnic groups, in particular with ethnic Albanians.

ABBREVIATIONS

BHRN	Balkan Human Rights Network
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DA	Democratic Alternative
DPA	Democratic Party of Albanians
EU	European Union
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
HCNM	High Commissioner on National Minorities
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PDP	Party for Democratic Prosperity
SDSM	Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia
SEE	South East Europe
SP	Stability Pact for South East Europe
UN	United Nations
VMRO-DPMNE	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity
WT	Working Table

I. INTRODUCTION

The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), with support from the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Secretariat for Peace and Stability / FRESTA) and the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organised the first meeting of the *NGO Roundtable on Inter-Ethnic Relations in the FYR of Macedonia* in Flensburg, Germany, from 10-13 December 2000. This meeting was attended by over 20 local NGOs from Skopje and other parts of the country working mainly in the areas of human rights, civil society and conflict resolution; women's issues; and the media. At the same time, most ethnic communities living in the country were represented (Albanian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Roma, Serb, Turkish and Vlach). In addition, a representative from the OSCE and the Council of Europe as well as eight international experts on minority issues and networking in the areas of human and minority rights were invited. The working language was English. This was the first of a series of events within a larger ECMI project entitled "NGO Roundtable on Inter-Ethnic Relations in the FYR of Macedonia", whose second meeting is scheduled for April 2001 in the FYR of Macedonia. This first meeting was held in Flensburg, at the heart of the German-Danish Border Region, in order to offer a neutral environment and an atmosphere which would foster dialogue, cooperation and the exchange of ideas. This decision was also motivated by the desire of the Macedonian participants to learn more about experiences in minority-majority relations in other regions. This report seeks to provide an account of the discussions that took place during this meeting.

If the various international, regional and local initiatives to improve inter-ethnic relations in Southeast Europe are to succeed, actors at all levels and especially local NGOs should be encouraged to cooperate and to serve as an integrating force of the various ethnic groups living in the country rather than to reflect ethnic differences and to reinforce the separation between the various ethnic communities. Although expectations have been high since the launch of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe in June 1999, it was not until the Romanian co-chairmanship of Working Table 1 on Human Rights and Democratisation since June 2000 that due attention has been paid to the role of civil society and non-governmental organisations in the successful implementation of the Stability Pact. ECMI therefore considers it important

to address the role of local NGOs in improving inter-ethnic relations and in promoting inter-ethnic communication.

Following discussions with ECMI Board member representing the OSCE, Ambassador Tore Bøgh, ECMI developed the idea in December 1999 to establish an *NGO Roundtable on Inter-Ethnic Relations in the FYR of Macedonia*. A fact-finding visit to the country was then conducted from 12-19 June 2000 with the aim to assess the current level of inter-ethnic relations and the potential of an ECMI project focussing on the NGO sector, as well as to gain an overview of current projects in the areas of inter-ethnic relations.³ Having identified the need for increased networking among NGOs interested in improving inter-ethnic relations and the need to pool resources and combine forces in order to have a greater impact, ECMI proceeded with developing the project.

The overall aim of this project is to foster constructive discussion between Macedonian NGOs on the question of inter-ethnic relations in the country and to promote dialogue and cooperation on main issues of concern through the establishment of a forum for regular consultation, communication and cooperation. By drawing on positive experience and best practice, and also by building an atmosphere of mutual trust, this initiative seeks to encourage the generation of joint projects and other forms of cooperation between Macedonian NGOs with similar interests with a view to preventing conflict and building a tolerant, multi-ethnic Macedonian society based on the principle of democratic citizenship. A Government representative will also be invited at a later stage to report on the outcomes of the Roundtable to the Macedonian Government.

Roundtable participants will be asked to formulate ideas on how to enhance and formalise their cooperation through, *inter alia*, the formulation of *joint projects* cutting across 'ethnic borders' rather than projects targeted at a particular ethnic community. ECMI will assist in the evaluation of these joint projects as well as in seeking funds from the international community. Another major task of this project is to establish an *NGO Network on Inter-Ethnic Relations in Southeastern Europe*

³ See the report of the fact-finding visit by ECMI Research Associate Farimah Daftary at <http://www.ecmi.de/publications/jemie/data/macedonia.html>.

linking NGOs interested in human rights, minority issues and conflict resolution throughout the Southeast European region. Starting with the NGOs involved in the Macedonian Roundtable, it will be expanded to incorporate organisations from neighbouring countries, in order to promote NGO networking and cooperation across borders within a regional perspective. This network will build on the experience of relevant established regional NGO networks of which some Macedonian NGOs are already members.

We hope that by establishing this NGO Roundtable ECMI can facilitate the communication and cooperation between local NGOs and also with other interested actors in the region and thereby serve to integrate Macedonian NGOs in regional initiatives to build peace and stability. The NGO Roundtable also seeks to provide a framework for facilitating the contribution of international donors and international NGOs active in the region by providing them with an opportunity to support integrative projects rather than those benefiting a particular ethnic community.

Farimah Daftary

ECMI Research Associate

Flensburg, 5 February 2001

II. BACKGROUND: INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE FYR OF MACEDONIA AND THE LOCAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR⁴

In November 1999, the OSCE Istanbul Summit Declaration commended the government of the "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" for its commitment to domestic reforms designed to enhance stability and economic prosperity. At the same time, it emphasised the importance of continued attention to the development of inter-ethnic relations. The FYR of Macedonia represents an apparently successful model of preventive diplomacy and good inter-ethnic relations. Nevertheless, especially as a result of the conflicts in the region, a serious degradation of inter-ethnic relations has occurred over the past decade, mainly between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. The Kosovo conflict in the first half of 1999 posed a particularly serious threat to the fragile inter-ethnic equilibrium in the country by exacerbating ethnic divisions. Even though tensions have somewhat subsided and steps have been taken by the Macedonian Government to improve inter-ethnic relations by addressing a few pressing issues and by supporting some NGO initiatives, there are still many questions to be dealt with.

Furthermore, there is a certain degree of uncertainty within the general population regarding future prospects for the country due to the lingering belief that the demands of ethnic Albanians are merely steps towards secession or the creation of a Greater Albania—perceptions which are augmented by statements made in the local press. Moreover, the Roma population faces considerable challenges related not only to the burden of Roma refugees from Kosovo but also to other spheres such as access to education and employment.

The current picture is that of a country divided along ethnic lines, with virtual parallel societies for ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, and a lack of communication

⁴ For more on this topic, see Farimah Daftary, "Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Role of the Local NGO Sector in Promoting Inter-Ethnic Communication," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (JEMIE) (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues) (at <http://www.ecmi.de/publications/jemie/data/macedonia.html>). See also: MRG Greece, James Pettifer and Hugh Poulton, "The Albanians of Macedonia," In: *The Southern Balkans*, Minority Rights Group Report 4/94 (London: MRGI, 1994).

and interaction between ordinary people from different ethnic backgrounds. This has resulted in mistrust and misunderstandings leading to inter-ethnic tensions, in particular over language and education issues. According to some experts,⁵ inter-ethnic relations have been on the decrease also because of the lack of discussion fora. Thus, according to some analysts, if due attention is not paid to inter-ethnic relations, then a new conflict could break out in this country which is also facing serious economic problems.

A. THE YUGOSLAV LEGACY

The relevant historical legacy is not one of ‘ancient hatreds’ but rather the socio-economic structure left over from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, of which the Socialist Republic of Macedonia was a member from 1943 to 1991. During this period, despite many human rights abuses, an extensive system of collective rights for minorities was established. In reality, however, discrimination against certain ethnic groups was common practice and ethnic Albanians especially resented not being considered a "constituent people" like the ethnic Macedonians and felt like second class citizens.

During the Yugoslav period, the socio-economic, cultural and educational gap between ethnic groups widened and the minority policies pursued were insufficient to curb the demands of the ethnic Albanian community.⁶ Protests escalated in the 1980s, also as a side-effect of the demands for more autonomy by ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. In 1989 a new constitution was adopted defining the Socialist Republic of Macedonia as "the national state of the Macedonian nation" rather than "the state of the Macedonian people and the Albanian and the Turkish minorities" as it had stood before.

In 1991, the Macedonian legislature adopted a declaration of sovereignty, which was supported by almost 70% of the population in a subsequent referendum held on 8

⁵ Mirjana Najčevska and Violeta Petroska Beška, “Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia”, *Helsinki Monitor* 10:3, 1999.

⁶ See the *Report on Minority Rights in the Republic of Macedonia*, September 1999 by the Macedonian Helsinki Committee (at: http://www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/macedonia/macedonia_NGO.htm).

September 1991. The Albanian community boycotted the referendum, preferring to hold its own (unofficial) referendum on political and cultural autonomy in January 1992, claiming that over 90 % of ethnic Albanians participated and that 90% were in favour. After a long dispute on the official name of the country, on 8 April 1993, the United Nations recognised the country under the temporary name "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

B. ETHNIC COMPOSITION AND LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR MINORITIES

The FYR of Macedonia is composed of large numbers of different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups (non-ethnic Macedonians represent one third of the population of 1.95 million) with a strong sense of their distinct identity. Ethnic Albanians mostly live in compact settlements in the western part of the country (forming over 60% of the populations of Tetovo and Gostivar), and also in the capital Skopje where they constitute 14% of the population. Most ethnic Serbs live in villages in the north, in the Kumanovo valley and Skopska Crna Gora. The Vlachs live in and around Bitola, Resen and Kruševo. The Roma and Turkish communities are dispersed throughout the country.

The main languages spoken are Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Romanes, Serbian, Vlach and others. Ethnic and linguistic differences are in turn reinforced by religious differences. Ethnic Albanians are mostly Muslim (98.2%), although there are smaller groups of Catholics (0.2%) and Orthodox (0.2%). Ethnic Macedonians, on the other hand, are mainly Orthodox (94.8%).

The most relevant domestic legal instrument regulating minority rights is the *Constitution* adopted by the independent state in November 1991. Its preamble promulgated that "Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent coexistence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia." Ethnic Albanians are particularly unhappy with this formulation and would prefer a civic definition of the Macedonian people (see below). Members of these "nationalities" are guaranteed full equality as citizens (Art. 9) but they are also granted special rights. Article 48 deals exclusively

with national identity, granting members of nationalities "the right freely to express, foster and develop their identity and national attributes." The same article also grants members of nationalities the right to instruction in their language in primary and secondary education. In schools where education is carried out in the language of a nationality, the Macedonian language is also studied. The Constitution additionally provides minorities with the right to free expression of national identity (Art.8). The constitutional provisions for members of nationalities are elaborated further in separate laws in the areas of education, local self-government, the media, etc; there is no separate act dealing with the rights of members of nationalities.

The official language of the country is Macedonian, written in the Cyrillic alphabet, but minority languages and alphabets may also be officially used in addition to the Macedonian language, in units of self-government where the "majority" or "a considerable number" of inhabitants belong to a nationality, in a manner determined by law (Art. 7).

The Constitution provides for a *Council for Inter-Ethnic Relations* (Art. 78), consisting of the President of the Assembly and two members each from the ranks of the Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs and Roma, as well as two members from the ranks of other nationalities in Macedonia. Its role is to consider issues related to inter-ethnic relations and to submit ideas and suggestions for their resolution. It has been criticised for under-representing the Albanian minority and for not having the power to influence government policy. There is also a general *Ombudsman* which was established in February 1997 to represent citizens' human rights interests before the Government.

The 1995 *Law on Self-Government*, prepared in cooperation with the Council of Europe, includes important provisions concerning the official use of minority languages at the municipal level. According to article 89, at the sessions of the local council and other organs of local self-government, the minority language will be in official use, together with Macedonian, where the majority (over 50%) or a significant number (over 20%) of the citizens are members of a nationality. Under these conditions, the status, decisions, and other general acts passed by the organs are published in the two languages. The minority language is also in use, together with

the Macedonian language, on signs and inscriptions in public places in municipalities where citizens belonging to a nationality constitute a majority (at least 50%). If the municipal council so wishes, this may also be applied to municipalities with a considerable number (at least 20%) of minority inhabitants.

The process of legislative reform has been slow and the Constitutional Court has had to intervene on many occasions to bring laws in conformity with the Macedonian Constitution. By now, most basic laws have been put into place and create the basis for the respect and promotion of human rights. However, there are still many technical and financial difficulties in implementing these rights.

At the international level, the FYR of Macedonia has undertaken many important obligations under the UN treaty system and is a party to virtually all major international human rights instruments. A member of the Council of Europe since 9 November 1995, it is a party to the *European Convention on Human Rights* and several of its protocols, as well as to the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (entered into force on 1 February 1998), *inter alia*. In its instrument of ratification, the FYR of Macedonia declared that the term "national minorities" used in the Framework Convention is considered to be identical to the term "nationalities" which is used in the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Macedonia and that the provisions of the Framework Convention would be applied to the Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Roma and Serbian national minorities living on its territory. The *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* was signed on 25 July 1996 but has not yet been ratified.

On 5 April 2000, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe decided to end its monitoring procedure, declaring that the country has honoured important obligations as a member state in an exemplary fashion. Still, it urged the ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian communities to continue striving for full integration of the Albanian minority.

C. MAIN ISSUES IN INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS

The newly-independent country inherited the ethnic problems of the Yugoslav era. It is in the field of education that the separation between the different ethnic communities is most visible: ethnic Albanian children attend separate classes in their mother tongue at the pre-, elementary and high school level. Even in ethnically mixed schools, there is not much contact between students with different mother tongues as they attend separate classes under the same roof; the same situation generally applies to teachers. Students find themselves in an atmosphere of negative stereotypes and ethnic prejudices which cannot be discarded on the basis of personal experience with members of the "other" ethnic community.⁷

A considerable rise in inter-ethnic tensions in 1997 cast doubts on the country's future stability, despite progress made in the economy and foreign relations. Early that year, protests occurred over Albanian-language education at university level; that same summer, armed clashes broke out between various ethnic groups and the police in the predominantly ethnic Albanian towns of Tetovo and Gostivar where the mayors had been flying the Albanian flag. The beatings of demonstrators in Gostivar—essentially a show of strength by the (then) ruling Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM) but also a means of diverting attention from economic reforms—resulted in four dead and some 250 wounded. The two ethnic Albanian mayors received stiff prison sentences for violating the Constitution.⁸

Although political parties have generally refrained from inflammatory statements since the new government was elected in 1998, one criticism levied against the political parties is that their discourse changes radically depending on whether they are in power or in opposition. The municipal elections held on 10 and 24 September 2000, which resulted in a victory for the government coalition parties (VMRO-DPMNE, DA and PDP), were marred by violence and assaults on persons and property in certain constituencies (mostly Western Macedonia) and shooting incidents occurred between supporters of the two ethnic Albanian parties.

⁷ See V. Petroska Beška, M. Popovski and N. Kenig-Bogdanovska, *Ethnic Stereotypes Among Future Pre-School and Primary School Teachers* (Skopje: Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project, 1998)

⁸ The two mayors were released under the new government.

The section that follows is a very brief sketch of the main issues and does not claim to be exhaustive or complete. It should also be noted that general economic and social issues are probably considered much more pressing by the general population.

1. The Preamble of the Constitution

The dissatisfaction of ethnic Albanians with the formulation of the preamble of the Constitution led to confrontations with the newly-elected democratic government in 1992. Arben Xhaferi, who is president of the DPA, has stated that ethnic Albanians do not agree that Macedonia is a country of "one people." Instead, they want it to be a country of "all its citizens." But according to President Trajkovski, the Constitution grants all citizens of the country equal rights.

2. Effective Participation of Minorities in Public Life

Mechanisms exist to promote the participation of non-ethnic Macedonians in education, public employment, the police and other spheres. Despite these measures, they are still under-represented. The UN Human Rights Committee noted the increase since 1990 in minority participation in political, administrative, cultural and other institutions; but it expressed concern at the fact that it is still well below a level commensurate with their proportion of the population, especially as regards the Roma populations.⁹ It therefore encouraged the Macedonian Government to strengthen its programmes to increase representation of ethnic Albanians and other groups in public life, including in the civil service, army and police. The 2000 World Report by the U.S. based Human Rights Watch also drew attention to continued under-representation of non-ethnic Macedonians.

Although there are no official complaints about discrimination, ethnic Albanians cite "quiet discrimination". Despite significant improvement, there is still under-representation of ethnic Albanians in government bodies and administration, especially at middle levels, the army and the police.

⁹ *Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee: Macedonia (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)* 18 August 1998. *Consideration of Reports Submitted by State Parties under Article 40 of the Covenant* (CCPR/C/79/Add. 96) (at: <http://www.unhchr.ch>).

Since 1994, the Albanian community has participated in government. Following parliamentary elections, a new coalition government was formed in November 1998 by three former opposition parties, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), Democratic Alternative (DA) and the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA).¹⁰ The other ethnic Albanian party, the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), is now in opposition with its former government coalition partner, the Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM). The presidential elections in October 1999, which resulted in the victory of VMRO-DPNE candidate Boris Trajkovski, highlighted the political importance of the country's ethnic Albanian population, as their votes were key to his victory over the SDSM candidate Tito Petkovski. The ethnic Albanian community today is represented by 25 deputies at the Macedonian Parliament, 5 government ministers (one of whom is a Deputy Prime Minister) and 5 deputy ministers.¹¹

3. Education and Language Issues

Education and language-related issues are quite complex in this multi-ethnic country and generally reflect the ethnic Albanians' desire for equal opportunities in education and more control over their own affairs, especially in the educational and cultural spheres, while ethnic Macedonians feel the need to preserve their identity and culture and note that, unlike in the case of ethnic Albanians, there is no other country in the region which would promote the Macedonian language and culture.

a. Primary and Secondary Education

Great discrepancies exist between different ethnic groups in the field of education. At the primary level, the proportional share of the ethnic groups in the student body, especially of ethnic Albanians, Roma and Turks, does not correspond to their proportional share in the total population, particularly in terms of female representation.. The combined ethnic and gender factors are just as striking at the

¹⁰ Update: DA is no longer part of the governing coalition.

¹¹ From 1994 to 1998, ethnic Albanians were represented by 19 members of Parliament, 5 ministers (one of whom was a Deputy Prime Minister) and 4 deputy ministers. Although ethnic Albanians claim that they are now less represented than they used to be given that the total number of ministries in the present government has increased, the situation has certainly improved in terms of providing a more significant presence of DPA representatives among high-level state administrators.

secondary school level. At present, limited minority language teaching is provided in primary and secondary schools.

Primary education, which is compulsory, is available in Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian. In 1995 extracurricular instruction in the Vlach language was started while in the 1996/1997 school year optional education in the Roma language was introduced at a few elementary schools. Secondary education is not compulsory and instruction is offered in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish. There must be at least 24 minority pupils in a class before they can be taught in their mother tongue (30 pupils were needed under the law on secondary education from 1985).

There is a general agreement that the quality of education in Albanian-language schools at the primary and secondary level must be improved but no general consensus on how best to achieve this. There has been an upward trend in the participation of minority students in secondary education in their mother tongue, from 10% in 1994/1995 to over 13% in 1996/1997. But there have also been protests by parents and teachers against the opening of minority language classes.¹²

b. Higher Education in the Minority Language and Tetovo University

The question of higher education in the minority language has been one of the main sources of dispute between the ethnic Albanian community and the Macedonian Government and also a major source of inter-ethnic tensions amongst the general population. The government has tried to give ethnic Albanian students more opportunities to enter university through a quota system.¹³ Thus, the percentage of Albanian students thus grew from 2.4% in the 1991/1992 academic year to 5.2% in 1994/1995 but this is still far lower than the official share of ethnic Albanians in the population. The same is even more true for the Roma community (see below).

¹² In May 2000, for example, thousands of parents and teachers protested in Bitola at government plans to provide an Albanian language class at a local secondary school claiming that this would prompt Albanians from neighbouring areas to attend the school thereby undermining its "Macedonian identity"; in the end, the Government withdrew its plans.

¹³ A quota of 10% for all minority students was introduced in 1991/1992. It was adjusted in 1996/1997 so that it now corresponds to the respective nationality's share of the total population, according to the census. The share of ethnic Albanians enrolled in the country's two universities was 10% in 1997/1998.

Ethnic Albanians have long demanded that the State provide higher education in Albanian. The legal situation until recently was unclear: While the Constitution did not prohibit the use of minority languages in higher education or set limitations for their use in private institutions, according to the Law on Higher Education, all tuition had to be in the Macedonian language exclusively, with some exceptions for the subjects most closely linked with fostering ethnic identity. Theoretically, however, nothing prevents the establishment of private institutions according to article 45 of the Constitution which states that: "citizens have the right to establish private schools at all levels of education, with the exception of primary education, under conditions determined by law."

During the Yugoslav period, most ethnic Albanian students from FYR of Macedonia attended Priština University. In the independent country, the previous government tolerated higher education in Albanian for teacher training programmes only. The trigger of the conflict over higher education was the effective closure of Albanian-language courses in Priština in 1991 resulting in a shortage of qualified teachers for Albanian-language instruction. The Macedonian Government opened a Pedagogical Academy with a two-year programme in Albanian at Skopje University. In 1995/1996, the Pedagogical Academy was transformed into a Pedagogical Faculty with a four-year study programme intended to train teachers for pre-school and primary teachers. Ethnic Albanian students began boycotting courses offered in Macedonian only, so that in early 1997 the Government finally passed a law¹⁴ permitting the Pedagogical Faculty to teach all the courses for ethnic Albanian students in the Albanian language. This, however, led to protests by ethnic Macedonian students. Because of a shortage of qualified Albanian-speaking teachers, it was not until February 1998 that all courses were offered in Albanian.

c. The Question of Tetovo University

In 1994 a private Albanian-language university was established in Tetovo by the municipal councils of Tetovo, Gostivar and Debar. Although the 1995 Law on Local Self-Government gave no jurisdiction over higher education to local authorities, the mayors of 22 municipalities governed by ethnic Albanian parties joined the initial

¹⁴ Law on Languages of Instruction at the Skopje Pedagogical Faculty, enacted in January 1997.

three founders in 1997. Tetovo University has been functioning ever since without official recognition, funded by the ethnic Albanian community in the country and abroad. While the ethnic Albanian community has consistently pressed for it to be recognised and state-funded, the prevalent opinion among ethnic Macedonians is that this is an unnecessary institution which does not provide quality education, and that those wishing to study in Albanian to be teachers may well do so at the Skopje Pedagogical faculty.

From the beginning of his mandate in 1993, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities had extensively mediated on the question of higher education for minorities.¹⁵ He has stressed that all population groups should benefit from the creation of a new institution of higher education, and that employment opportunities should be guaranteed by training students also for business and administration, rather than Albanian studies only. After lengthy discussions with the Macedonian Government in May 2000, the HCNM suggested a multicultural compromise solution in the shape of a private university offering courses not only in Albanian but also in Macedonian and English. There would be two fields of specialisation: (1) pedagogical training for primary and secondary levels; and (2) public administration and business management. Some, but not all, of the professors from Tetovo University would be hired and Tetovo graduates would have to take exams in order to have their diplomas recognised. Funding for the first four years would come from foreign countries and private donors.

The government, including the DPA, reacted favourably to these suggestions and proclaimed its resolve to finally settling the question of Tetovo University. A major positive development came on 25 July 2000 when the *Law on Higher Education* was adopted by Parliament, opening the way for higher education in the minority language by allowing the establishment of private institutes of higher education with instruction in the minority language. On 26 July, Parliament voted to approve an OSCE-sponsored measure to legalise Tetovo University as an accredited private institution. This was a compromise between the demands of the Albanian community in Macedonia for a state-run Albanian language university and the refusal of the Macedonian Government to grant such state accreditation. The opposition PDP

¹⁵ For the recommendations of the OSCE HCNM on the FYR of Macedonia, see <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/recommendations/fyrom/index.htm>.

protested the new law by walking out of the parliamentary debates. In contrast, the DPA voiced its satisfaction. Unlike in 1997, when the establishment of the Albanian-language Pedagogical Faculty in Skopje led to protests, no such popular outbreaks were observed.

The official name of the new institution is "University of Southeast Europe in Tetovo" and it will be an internationally-funded multilingual private institution with a European, international and modern orientation, while being committed to Albanian language and culture. It will comprise of five faculties and two centres, one for foreign languages and one for computing. The working languages will be Albanian, English and Macedonian. The new institution is expected to open its doors on 1 October 2001.¹⁶

d. Other Language-Related Issues

Calls to make Albanian an official language on the same level as Macedonian—based on the view that ethnic Albanians should be granted the same status as ethnic Macedonians—have so far been rejected. It can also be said that, in practice, the use of minority languages in communication with administrative and legal authorities is restricted. Several other language-related items remain unresolved, for example the right to use a minority language in courts, as well as a new set of internal rules for parliament which would enable minority representatives to use their mother tongue in parliamentary proceedings. The Vlachs are also concerned about language- and education-related issues (lack of primary education in the mother tongue, no university programmes for the Vlach culture and language, etc.).

There have been calls by ethnic Albanian members of Parliament to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. An expert committee created by the Macedonian Government to analyse the legal and political implications of ratification concluded that non-ratification should not be a cause for discontent as there are already provisions for the protection of minority languages in the spheres of education, culture and the media.

¹⁶ The future financial commitment of the Macedonian Government is unclear and there is a lack of international standards as to whether there is an obligation on behalf of the state to fund higher education in the minority language.

4. Religious issues

The Macedonian Orthodox Church enjoys a privileged status equivalent to that of a state church. Article 8 of the 1997 *Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups* only allows one religious denomination for every faith. Being adherents of the Orthodox faith, *Vlachs* are therefore not permitted to establish their own Vlach religious organisation. Other restrictions on religious groups are due to the distinction between "traditional" denominations which were registered as "religious communities" (the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Community and the Roman Catholic Church) and enjoyed various privileges, and others which had to be registered as "religious groups". The Serbian minority has for a long time been unable to exercise its religion freely under the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serb Orthodox clergy are prevented from entering the country or holding services for the ethnic Serb population. The adoption of the 1997 Law has made resolution of this issue even more unlikely.

Vlachs, Turks and Macedonian Muslims also experience a certain degree of discrimination by not being allowed to practice their religious rituals in their mother tongue.

5. The Media

The media in Southeast Europe has played a major role in propagating ethnic conflict and war in the region. Although the Macedonian media does not deliberately exacerbate ethnic tensions, it greatly reinforces ethnic divisions. Another problem is the lack of professionalism as well as the absence of truly independent print media as political forces attempt to assert their influence. Each ethnic community reads its own daily which is monolingual and offers a mono-ethnic perspective; there are separate dailies for Macedonian speakers (*Nova Makedonija*, *Večer* and *Dnevnik*) and Albanian speakers (*Flaka* and *Fakty*). *Nova Makedonija*, *Večer*, *Flaka* and *Birlik* (a Turkish-language newspaper) are published by the state-owned printing and publishing company "Nova Makedonija" while *Dnevnik* and *Fakty* are "independent". *Roma Times*, the first independent Roma-language newspaper (60% is in Romani, the rest is in Macedonian and English), was launched in January 2001. A private bilingual Macedonian-Albanian daily, *Global*, is due to be launched in February 2001 with the aim of improving communication between the two communities.

Most of the programming on national television is in Macedonian, but there are some programmes in five other languages.¹⁷ Macedonian Radio provides a separate channel in other languages. In April 1997, a Law on Broadcasting was finally passed to provide a framework for the functioning of the hundreds of private media which had appeared in recent years (there are 250 private television stations alone, including stations with programming in the minority language).

6. Roma Issues¹⁸

The Roma community is very complex. Roma tend to be Muslim, although there are also Christian groups. They are generally bilingual, and often tri-or quadri-lingual (Albanian, English, German, Macedonian, Romani, Serbian and old Turkish). There are settled as well as non-settled Roma groups, and groups are also delineated by profession. As in most other countries, official statistics do not reflect the actual number of Roma living in the country. One reason for this, according to the Budapest-based European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), is the pressure exerted by the non-Roma to declare that they are something else. There are also two groups who do not claim the Romani identity and are not recognised as Roma by the Roma but are regarded as Gypsies by non-Roma.¹⁹

Although the situation of Roma was traditionally considered exemplary, at least in a comparative perspective, the reality is different although one can still say that Roma do not suffer the same level of discrimination and intolerance as elsewhere in Europe. Roma in the FYR of Macedonia do not suffer the same level of racism and racially-motivated violence as elsewhere and the Romani language and culture are present in Skopje. Roma are explicitly mentioned in the preamble of the Constitution as a "nationality". There is one Romani representative in parliament, and there are Roma-language radio stations and two private Romani television stations. The municipality

¹⁷ There are two hours of state television programmes per day in Albanian, one hour in Turkish, as well as 13 minutes weekly in Vlach, Serbian and Romany each. On Macedonian state radio there are 570 minutes daily in Albanian, 270 minutes in Turkish, and two hours in Vlach and Romany; there is also a programme for listeners abroad in Albanian, Bulgarian and Greek.

¹⁸ See European Roma Rights Center, *A Pleasant Fiction: The Human Rights Situation of Roma in Macedonia*, Country Reports Series No. 7 (Budapest: ERRC, July 1998).

¹⁹ These are the "Egyptians" (Also called by locals "Gyptari", "Edjupci" or "Dyupci") in Struga and Ohrid in south-western Macedonia (3,307 persons in the 1991 census) who do not speak Romani but Albanian; and the "Krei" ("Christians") of eastern and central Macedonia.

of Šuto Orizari outside Skopje, predominantly inhabited by Roma (ca. 20,000 Roma inhabitants), has elected a Roma mayor and has adopted Romanes as an official language.

Still, according to the ERRC, Roma in the FYR of Macedonia, too, are the subject of human rights violations such as police abuse and racially-motivated violence. ERRC also expressed concern that because of the state's belief that Roma enjoy complete civil rights, it has been lax in responding to allegations of human rights abuses. The Act on Citizenship of 11 November 1992 led to citizenship difficulties for many Roma.²⁰ There is also a general problem of exclusion of Roma from education as many Romani children do not attend school at all or only irregularly. When in 1995 the government introduced separate quotas to reflect the percentage of minorities in the total population, the number of Roma enrolled at Skopje University increased to nine in the 1996/1997 school year, which is still very low. The single largest obstacle is financial as Roma cannot afford school expenses; another reason is that the schools are far away from Roma settlements.

Over the past decade, the Roma community has become increasingly involved in its own affairs and there has been a proliferation of Roma NGOs.

7. The Kosovo Conflict and the Refugee Crisis

With the Kosovo Conflict in 1999 and the ensuing refugee crisis, the question of inter-ethnic relations gained particular urgency. The country did its best to cope with the first wave of ca. 300,000 refugees, mostly ethnic Albanians, in roughly-built camps and in families. The crisis was compounded by the slow reaction of the international community in providing aid. The influx of ethnic Albanian refugees generated fear amongst the ethnic Macedonian population that this would disrupt the fragile ethnic balance of the country. After these refugees left as part of a process of voluntary repatriation, there was a second wave of refugees, this time mainly Roma and Serbs.

²⁰ Only individuals with Macedonian republican citizenship (rather than residence) were automatically eligible to receive citizenship of the new state, despite the fact that republican citizenship within SFRY was essentially symbolic. A large number of Roma did not hold such citizenship and were consequently not included in the first body of new citizens and many Roma who could have qualified did not take the necessary steps or had difficulties meeting the requirements. Citizens of other republics had to pay a \$50 fee to process the application and had to show a "permanent source of funds". Given that the level of unemployment among Roma is close to 70%, this created particular obstacles.

The level of concern by the government, the general public and the media was significantly lower in their case.

By July 1999, most of the first wave of refugees from Kosovo had been repatriated (700,000 had been repatriated according to a UNHCR report from 19 July 1999). The second wave of refugees, most of whom were Roma and also Serbs, were settled in camps and with host families. Nearly 80% of the refugees still remaining in the country in 2000 are Roma²¹ and are housed with host families (usually of the same ethnic background) or in collective centres. UNHCR-Skopje also deals with some 1,400 Bosnian refugees (there were originally ca. 30,000 refugees from Bosnia in 1992). UNHCR is working with the Macedonian Government to design an asylum/refugee status determination system and to help draft a refugee law. UNHCR has also promoted the translation of important international refugee laws and contributed to the establishment of the Center for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies in Skopje.

There are also citizenship problems affecting 2,000-90,000 refugees who are either stateless or have an irregular citizenship status with expired Yugoslav passports.

D. THE LOCAL MACEDONIAN NGO SECTOR

Macedonian NGOs must operate in a context in which various ethnic groups seek to promote their own identity and to claim their rights in a mono-ethnic framework, rather than seeking ways to reconcile their specific needs within the more general framework of a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. Despite the activities of a multitude of NGOs with various mandates, their achievements have been limited. According to one view, "if the wealth of Macedonia were to be measured by the number of its NGOs, it would certainly rank high among highly developed countries. But, if this social activity would be evaluated by its 'productiveness', it would

²¹ According to statistics provided by the Center for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (CRFMS) in Skopje, there are currently 5024 persons from Kosovo with temporary humanitarian status (THP) of which nearly 80 % are Roma, 6.7% ethnic Albanians, 6 % ethnic Serbs, and 7.5% others; in addition, there were 360 ethnic Albanian refugees from other parts of Serbia.

certainly be qualified as one of the many 'unproductive' branches in this country."²² Indeed, there are roughly 600 organisations registered under the new 1998 NGO law²³ (there were as many as 2000 before), but not all can be said to be really active. Inevitably, there will be a process of weeding out of the less active NGOs.

The reasons for the relatively marginal impact of local NGOs can be traced to three characteristics displayed by the local NGO sector: it is donor-driven, it is atomised, and it operates on a strong ethnic basis. NGOs have generally not been able to effectively address inter-ethnic issues because they themselves reflect the ethnic division of Macedonian society. They tend to deal with similar issues but their efforts are targeted at a specific ethnic community: there are for example over 60 NGOs dealing with women's issues but each deal with women of a particular ethnic group. An additional factor to bear in mind is that the NGO sector constitutes an important area of employment in a country where the unemployment rate is about 37%²⁴ and working in that sector confers a certain status. In addition to the NGO "hat", individuals tend to also be involved in business or politics.

Lack of co-ordination between international donors and international NGOs has also compounded the problem. The tendency of donors to work with a limited range of local organisations and the pressure on these NGOs to come up with donor-friendly projects in a context where domestic funding is scarce (there are no fiscal incentives to make donations to the non-profit sector), intensifies an atmosphere of competition rather than cooperation. International actors interested in the region should therefore make every effort to know who they are dealing with, rather than seeking easy recipients for funding.

²² "Non-Governmental Organisations in Macedonia – They exist but little good they do," AIM Skopje, 23 September 1999, reproduced in *Greek Helsinki Monitor*, 2 October 1999.

²³ The "Law for Citizens Associations and Foundations" of June 1998 made it mandatory for all NGOs to register anew by the end of 1998.

²⁴ According to one expert, however, the real unemployment figure is closer to 25% as many employed persons go unreported as such because some employers want to avoid paying social benefits and retirement benefits to the state. This is still a very high figure (see Sam Vaknin, "Unemployment - The Case of Macedonia" *Central Europe Review* 3:4, 29 January 2001 at: <http://www.ce-review.org/01/4/vaknin4.html>.)

This is not to say that one cannot find initiatives which are the result of cooperation between different NGOs and which seek to involve members of different ethnic communities. However, after the particular project has been completed, the various participating organisations tend to fall back into a relative isolationism. The numerous NGOs which have flourished over the past decade in the FYR of Macedonia have a key role to play in preventing conflict and building a tolerant, multi-ethnic society based on the principle of democratic citizenship. It is therefore crucial that the local NGOs be encouraged to serve as an integrating force of the various ethnic groups living in the country rather than merely reflecting ethnic differences and reinforcing the isolation of the various ethnic communities. The experience and leadership of the several truly multi-ethnic NGOs who have been successful will be precious in this regard.

III. THE ROUNDTABLE

A. OPENING SESSION

ECMI Director **Marc Weller** greeted the participants and opened the formal session of the roundtable at the premises of the European Centre for Minority Issues. He gave a brief overview of the tasks of the ECMI and its current projects especially concerning SEE. Stressing that the role of NGOs is to represent various interests which should then be translated into policy actions by governments but not to represent ethnicity, he then outlined the principal aim of this ECMI initiative to establish an *NGO Roundtable on Inter-Ethnic Relations in the FYR of Macedonia*, which is to support the work of NGOs in developing joint projects and other forms of cooperation. **Farimah Daftary**, ECMI Research Associate, then clarified a few issues concerning the practical proceedings of the NGO Roundtable.

The participants of the Roundtable then proceeded to briefly introduce themselves and the organisation which they represented (Annexes B and E).

B. SESSION I: INTEGRATING CIVIL SOCIETY IN INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

1. The FRESTA Programme of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr Jesper Højbjerg, Project Consultant for South Eastern Europe, introduced the programmes sponsored by the *Secretariat for Peace and Stability (FRESTA)* of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The overall objective of the FRESTA programme launched in summer 1999 under the title "Peace and Stability Through Cross-Boundary Civil Society Collaboration" is to support the development of peace and stability in SEE by assisting local partners to expand regional networks and partnerships, thereby strengthening the civilian parts of the societies across ethnic and national divisions. Four priority areas have been identified: (1) human rights; (2) the media; (3) refugees; and (4) youth. The countries involved are: Montenegro, the FYR of Macedonia, Albania, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Following a pilot phase of six months, regional NGO Networks were established in these four areas under the guidance of the Danish Center for Human

Rights (Copenhagen), the Danish School of Journalism (Århus), the Danish Refugee Council (Copenhagen) and the Danish Association for International Corporation. In order to ensure sustainability, these initiatives are all based on the principles of comprehensiveness, inter-dependence, infrastructure and pro-activeness. Each of the networks has an identity of its own and has adopted a memorandum of understanding; FRESTA provides the funding. Mr Højbjerg concluded by stressing the importance of thinking regionally and also the need to approach issues both from the top and from the grassroots level, without forgetting a middle-range of active professionals in civil society.

Dr Erik André Andersen of the Danish Center for Human Rights (Copenhagen) presented the FRESTA *Balkan Human Rights Network* (BHRN) whose aim is to promote human rights standards in the Balkans in legislation as well as in administrative practice. A further aim is to contribute to the peace-making and reconciliation process after a long period of violent conflicts. The long-term aim is to develop stable and democratic societies in the Balkans. Mr Andersen outlined the structure of the BHRN which was established by 9 NGOs. The secretariat of BHRN is located at the Danish Center for Human Rights but it will shortly be transferred to the region (Sarajevo). The main decision-making body of the Network is the Steering Committee, whose Chairman is also located in Sarajevo.

Main tasks over the past year have been to strengthen the organisational aspect of BHRN and to carry out the specific activities (human rights education, capacity-building, information, cross-cutting activities with other networks). Mr Andersen concluded by offering some lessons drawn. Modest failures can be traced back to (a) postponement of activities due to practical obstacles; (b) lack of capacity in BHRN; (c) underestimation of the resources needed for the implementation of activities; (d) lack of communication; (e) lack of responsibility. However, he characterised all these elements as transitional and also connected to the question of professionalism and thought they could therefore be solved in a concrete manner. The prevailing concern was the limited understanding of the notion of responsibility by some of the network members and a lack of understanding that this is an initiative of mutual interest to all members. He noted however on the positive side that project implementation had been generally successful. Finally, Mr Andersen cautioned against problems which may

arise as a result of a north-south division in the Balkans (or a Serbo-croatian speaking area in the North and the Albanian-speaking area in the South) which is reflected in the BHRN.

Mr Lars Funch Hansen of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) (Copenhagen) concluded the FRESTA part of the session with an overview of the *South East European Refugee Assistance Network (SEE-RAN)* which focuses on the inter-related problems of 2 million refugees in SEE. Of the original 25 member NGOs which met for the first time in December 1999, all save one are still part of SEE-RAN.²⁵ The mission statement of the network is: Repatriation / Reconciliation / Reintegration. The overall strategy is: classical networking (seminars, meetings, information exchange); project activities; and capacity-building. In addition, three thematic sub-groups have been formed to deal with legal, psycho-social and self-reliance issues. Mr Funch Hansen noted that in order to counteract the tendency for each sub-group to develop into a network of its own, a communication task group had been formed to ensure internal communication; a website is also being set up. Mr Funch Hansen continued by highlighting the importance of cross-cutting activities with other networks. The Secretariat of the network is currently located at the DRC office in Sarajevo but it will be transferred in one year to a local partner. A Co-ordinating Committee has just been elected and will have its first meeting in early 2001. Mr Hansen noted that this was an informal network operating on the basis of consensus which, unlike the BHRN, did not have a memorandum of understanding. He concluded by underlining the difficulties of forming a clear identity when the membership base is so diverse.

During the **discussion** one participant underlined the necessity for NGOs to take charge and carry the changes through. Another participant asked about the methodology used for needs assessment when setting up each network in order to avoid duplication of existing programmes. One of the speakers responded that the issues were so great that there was room for several initiatives. Another participant positively evaluated the FRESTA network for not imposing too much in terms of needs assessment, preferring self-reliance instead; he also commented that even when the achievements might seem limited, having brought together NGOs from all these

²⁵ These members include 4 from Serbia, 2 from Montenegro, 3 from Croatia, 6 from Bosnia, 5 from Macedonia, 2 from Albania, and 2 from Kosovo.

countries is an accomplishment in itself. Still, another participant warned that networking had become a big business and also urged western organisations and donors to co-ordinate amongst themselves.

2. International NGO Initiatives

Opening the afternoon session, **Dr Panayote Elias Dimitras**, Director of Greek Helsinki Monitor (Athens) and Minority Rights Group - Greece, informed the participants about two important international NGO initiatives in the area of minority rights: *The Center of Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe – Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE)* as well as the Balkan programme of Minority Rights Group International (MRGI). CEDIME-SE was launched in 1998 by Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group - Greece, in cooperation with the Institute on Southeastern Europe of Central European University (CEU). It is the first regional implementation programme of CEDIME which aims to cover all of Europe. The purpose of CEDIME-SE is to create the first comprehensive source of information on human and minority rights in SEE. All relevant materials are made available through a joint website with the *Balkan Human Rights Web Pages* which was launched in September 1998 (see also Session III below). Three types of information will be provided on this site: (1) comprehensive, comparable and continuously updateable presentations on all ethno-national, ethno-linguistic and religious minorities in Southeast Europe (ca. 120 in the twelve countries concerned); (2) comprehensive, comparable and continuously updateable guide to all documents on human and minority rights in SEE published in English by credible human and minority rights NGOs as well as a selection of IGO and government sources; and (3) weekly, monthly and occasional flash reports from daily monitoring of the major print media in each country for positive, neutral or negative images of neighbouring countries and peoples as well as minorities within each country. The compilation of materials will eventually be carried out by CEDIME-SE's proposed network of monitors.

The aim of the *MRGI programme, "Southeast Europe: Diversity and Democracy"* is to promote minority rights and inter-community cooperation. Furthermore, the programme seeks to achieve the following objectives: raise public awareness of minorities and minority rights; encourage cooperation between representatives of different communities throughout the region to address practical problems in

implementing minority rights standards; build local capacity to promote effective implementation of domestic and international minority rights; bring local problems to domestic policy level and international fora. The MRGI programme was developed jointly with partner NGOs from the region to ensure that it responds to their needs and to those of the minority communities with whom they work. The priority countries are Albania, Bosnia- Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the FYR of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Examples of activities under this programme include: annual training seminars in advocacy and rights; interactive workshops on local governance in multicultural communities, minority rights and development, and education in multi-ethnic societies; the translation of relevant MRGI publications into regional languages; as well as country or community specific projects such as a regional event to raise public awareness of the particular issues facing the Roma.

3. The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Mr Hans-Peter Furrer, Director of Political Affairs at the Council of Europe, first introduced the *Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe*. A Regional Table, chaired by Special Coordinator Mr Bodo Hombach in Brussels, is in charge of overall co-ordination of SP activities which have been grouped into three "working tables" on democratisation and human rights, including minority rights (WT1); economic reconstruction, development and cooperation (WT2); and security issues (WT3). Of particular interest is WT1, chaired by the OSCE HCNM Max van der Stoel, which consists of various task forces including: Human Rights and Minorities, Good Governance, Media, Education, Gender and others.²⁶

A fact-finding mission to the region was undertaken by a special delegation of the Council of Europe under WT1 Task Force on Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities. The aim of this mission was to form the basis for a systematic assessment of the views of governments and national minorities in SEE regarding projects related to resolving minority issues and inter-ethnic tensions. The report of this mission, "Promotion of Multi-Ethnic Society and Democratic Citizenship," identified a series of "Good Practices" and "Good Processes" which would contribute to the achievement of the objectives concerning multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society and democratic

²⁶ For more on the Stability Pact and its various working tables, see <http://www.stabilitypact.org>.

citizenship. Among the good processes listed was "networking and cooperation between NGOs dealing with inter-ethnic and minority issues". The report was presented to the conference on Inter-Ethnic Relations and Minorities in Southeastern Europe (Portoroz, Slovenia, 16-17 March 2000) and served as the basis for the *Framework Programme of Action* adopted at the conference.

Mr Furrer then focussed on one of the priorities of the Framework Programme of Action: a wide-ranging awareness-raising campaign to promote and restore multi-ethnic society and democratic citizenship in the region which is the aim of the *Council of Europe project "Link Diversity"*. As a first step, a philosophers' workshop was organised in December 2000 to discuss the meaning of the term "multi-ethnic society". National committees will be set up in each of the participating countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, the FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) as well as sectoral groups across the region (on the media, youth, NGOs, etc). This new project will be guided by the principle of inclusion, incorporating already existing initiatives, while also promoting new programmes in the region.

The final presentation of this session was by **Ms Anca Ciuca**, Foundation for Democratic Change (Bucharest), on the project "Southeast European NGOs for the Stability Pact". Ms Ciuca presented the SP as a great opportunity for civil society and NGOs to find their own solutions to problems in their country as well as to develop links with other NGOs in the region. Indeed, in the 1990s, the general tendency of the NGOs in the region was to look for partners from Western Europe and the US, due to the limited capacity of civil society to develop projects on its own. Another reason was the insufficient financial support for NGO activities from international donors. The idea therefore came about to identify NGOs willing to cooperate with one another and to embrace the SP as a means of finding solutions to the problems facing the region. The project "*Southeast European NGOs for the Stability Pact*" was launched at a conference in May 2000 in Sinaia (Romania) organised by the Berghof Center and the Foundation for Democratic Change. 25 NGOs from SEE²⁷ came together to discuss the impact of the SP on the region's civil society and the potential for cross-

²⁷ The NGOs represented: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Yugoslavia.

border activities. The conference formulated a set of Recommendations²⁸ addressed to SP WT1 which were later used by SP representatives in elaborating the "Agenda for Stability". Furthermore, the project initiators were tasked by the Romanian Foreign Ministry, co-chair of WT1 since June 2000, to draft a charter for civil society in Europe (see Closing Session below). The German Development Agency Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (EZE) has expressed support for the establishment of a network and has started the procedure to obtain funds from the German Development Fund.

Many questions during the **discussion** concerned the extent to which the Council of Europe campaign "Link Diversity" would concern the Roma. Mr Furrer clarified the matter by explaining that, in addition to working closely with the OSCE ODIHR Roma Representative Nicolae Gheorghe, there will also be Roma representatives in the individual national committees. One Macedonian participant stressed the importance of also investing in academic centres in order to fuel the NGO community with ideas. Another Macedonian participant suggested that a common NGO office be established for FYR of Macedonia and neighbouring countries and that an e-mail list be set up to develop close contacts between NGOs. However, an international expert warned that based on past experience with the Carnegie Commission, each country would argue for having the NGO center in its own country. Furthermore, the main challenge would be to define a sector of NGOs which can be inter-connected.

C. SESSION II: NGO ROUNDTABLE ON INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE FYR OF MACEDONIA

On the second day, the Roundtable focussed on the specific issues facing NGOs in the FYR of Macedonia and enabled Macedonian NGOs to provide their views of the main issues.

²⁸ The text of the Sinaia Recommendations may be found in the report *Southeast European NGOs for the Stability Pact*, Martina Fischer and Giovanni Scotto (eds), Occasional Paper Nr. 17 (Berlin: Berghof Research Center, September 2000), pp.12-22.

1. Introductory Presentations

Ms Petra Kovács, OSI-Hungary (Budapest), dealt with the topic of NGOs at the local level and introduced the *"Managing Multi-ethnic Local Communities" programme of the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI)*. This in-house research project was launched in November 1996 by the LGI with the general aim of identifying and distributing knowledge on innovative local policy-making practices in the fields of solving and preventing ethnic conflicts and pursuing multicultural politics in CEE and the CIS. The project seeks to develop a database of already existing knowledge and expertise as well as an information network. A pilot project focussed on the participation of minorities in the local decision-making process with the objective of identifying the links between democracy and minorities. Ms Kovács then touched on the differing abilities of "weak" vs. "strong" states to accommodate diversity and how NGOs can contribute. Possible roles for NGOs, in her view, include the representation of minority interests and the promotion of minority participation in the decision-making process; awareness-raising in public and state structures about the needs of minorities in a "bottom-up" approach; and the provision of services for their own ethnic constituency. These are all preferable to what she calls an "exit strategy" of minorities and the setting-up of parallel structures which might lead to instability within the country.

In order to stimulate discussion, **Dr Mirjana Najčevská**, Director of the Center for Human Rights and the CRFMS at the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research (Sts. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje) and also representing the Macedonian Helsinki Committee, gave her perspective on the main issues in inter-ethnic relations in the FYR of Macedonia and on the contribution of international and local NGOs. She drew attention to the broader structural and social problems faced by minority communities in the country, where more than 50% of ethnic Albanians and Turks live in rural areas. Disagreeing with statements by the Macedonian Government claiming that problems have been solved, Dr Najčevská cited some examples of issues faced by the various ethnic communities, for example violence against Roma, lack of publications in the Vlach language, problems with religious services in the minority languages or with the use of the minority language before the courts. She emphasised that there was still much work for NGOs, not least in helping people to communicate and to overcome mistrust. The persistence of problems does not mean that NGOs

have not achieved results as these are not always immediately visible and she especially commended NGOs with members from different ethnic backgrounds. However, she also noted that there were significant problems within the NGO sector, such as a lack of sustainability because funds are given on a project basis only, lack of a long-term strategic vision, and lack of communication because of a competitive rather than a co-operative approach between Macedonian NGOs. She illustrated this last point with the example of the numerous ecological NGOs which have emerged and whose membership is mono-ethnic even though 90% of ecological issues are common to all ethnic communities. She also pointed to problems resulting from the lack of co-ordination between the numerous international NGOs interested in the FYR of Macedonia. Recognising that they were needed in the first years after independence for their know-how and their ability to identify issues which Macedonian NGOs themselves could not, she underlined that there is much confusion now due to the multitude of projects initiated by international NGOs. Furthermore, certain projects emerge because they are donor-driven rather than need-driven. She concluded by reminding the participants of the power which they, as NGOs, have and called on them to join forces to make more effective use of this power and to make themselves heard by the Government.

Key questions issues raised in the **discussion** included:

- Why are Macedonian NGOs not more active at the international level?
- How can the strong linguistic barriers between ethnic communities be overcome? As a possible remedy, one Macedonian participant cited projects on multiculturalism in state administration and also bilingualism in minority-inhabited areas.
- Statistics and under-representation of the minority communities, for example of the Roma, in the official 1994 census. Several reasons were forwarded for this: some Roma had to declare another ethnicity or there was a lack of questionnaires in Romanes. One Macedonian participant questioned the validity of the 1994 census where 150,000 citizens seemed to have disappeared, stating that distrust in the government census had led the Albanian community to conduct its own census.
- The Council of Europe representative reminded the participants that the 1994 census had been conducted under the sponsorship of his organisation to allay the

fears of the ethnic Albanians who wanted to boycott it. He also called for looking at ways in which NGOs can promote an inclusive democratic and multi-ethnic society, urging them to look forward rather than towards the past.

2. The Working Group Sessions

Three parallel working group sessions were held on the following areas of NGO activity: (1) Human Rights, Civil Society and Conflict Resolution; (2) Women's Issues; (3) The Media. (No separate area for Roma or Youth issues was proposed by the organisers as it was felt that these issues should be addressed within each of the other three groups and also in order to avoid having all the Roma or Youth NGOs isolated in a single group.) Each group chose a facilitator as well as a rapporteur to sum up the discussions.

a. Working Group 1: Human Rights, Civil Society and Conflict Resolution

This working group consisted of the following NGOs: Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC), Organisation of Turkish Youth of Macedonia "RUMELI", International Center for Preventive Action and Conflict Resolution (ICPCR), European Centre for Integration-Macedonia, Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project, Association of European Student Structures-Macedonia, Center for Youth Initiatives "PONTI", Center for Multicultural Understanding and Cooperation (CMUC), Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI), Roma Community Center "DROM", Humanitarian and Charitable Association of Roma "Mesečina", Center for Refugees and Forced Migration Studies (CRFMS), and "MULTIKULTURA". The Rapporteur was ICPCR.

The Rapporteur briefly mentioned some of the projects being carried out by the NGOs in this first and largest working group (see Annex E). Issues of concern raised in this working group were:

- *Financing and related issues:* One common characteristic of many of the NGOs in this group was a single-donor profile. New NGOs face great difficulties in obtaining funding because of the practice of international donors to fund only certain NGOs. This might be due to the fact that it is easier for international NGOs to work with certain local NGOs. One Macedonian participant expressed the view

that you have to be a minority NGO to obtain funding and that if you represent a youth NGO, then you must be affiliated to a political party. He further commented that there were few domestic donors.

- *Mono-ethnic profile of NGOs:* Many of the NGOs are mono-ethnic and few of those present mentioned co-operative projects, either within the country or across borders. Appreciation and support was expressed for multi-ethnic initiatives which were seen to fill a "niche" such as "ALMATUROBO" which sought to provide about 120 young people from different ethnic backgrounds from all over the country (Albanians, Macedonians, Turks, Roma, Bosnians) the opportunity to meet. Two other initiatives along the same lines are "PONTI" and MULTIKULTURA.
- *Definition of a common ground:* The main challenge identified by the group was to define common ground for all the participating NGOs. A suggestion was therefore made by the participants was to hold several meetings to identify common ground and discuss ideas for cooperation before the next meeting of the Roundtable.

b. Working Group 2: Women's Issues

The following NGOs participated in this Working Group: Union of Women's Organisations of the Republic of Macedonia, Center for Human Rights at Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, Organisation of Serbian Women of Macedonia, Association of Vlach Women in Macedonia, Association of Roma Women (ESMA). The Rapporteur was the Union of Women's Organisations.

Having noted that no men participated in this group, the Rapporteur presented a brief overview of the activities of NGOs in this group, who already cooperate extensively within the framework of the Union of Women's Organisations of the Republic of Macedonia. These included an education campaign for women from all ethnic communities during election campaigns (other activities are described in Annex E).

c. Working Group 3: The Media

The aim of this group was to bring together NGOs working towards the improvement of inter-ethnic relations through the implementation of projects in the field of the media. This group consisted of participants from three Macedonian NGOs: the Roma

International Center in Macedonia, Union for Culture of the Vlach in Macedonia, and the Macedonian Press Center (Rapporteur).

The participants, all three of them journalists, exchanged information about their organisations and past activities. Examples of these included a project for Vlach journalists as well as education and training programmes for young Roma journalists, training on reporting diversity, and the monitoring of Albanian- and Macedonian-language print media. The group identified three common issues faced by journalists in the field of inter-ethnic relations: (1) Lack of education and training for mid-career journalists; (2) Lack of professionals, especially in media covering ethnic minorities; need for more diversity in the newsroom; and (3) the need to break the parallel information networks in the country (separate information systems with Albanian- and Macedonian-language media).

The group recommended that:

- NGOs and the media work together and also cooperate with the target groups (i.e. the various ethnic communities) in the fields of training, monitoring and research.
- Monitoring of the press be conducted in order to see whether there is adequate coverage of minority issues.
- NGOs be trained on how to better disseminate information about their work in order to fill the lack of information in the media about NGOs and their work and in order to overcome the general impression that NGOs are not doing their jobs properly.

Additional issues raised during the **discussion**:

- *Lack of information about the work of NGOs.* Need for Macedonian NGOs and the general public to be better informed about the activities of other NGOs in the country. NGOs should therefore advertise their work through the local media which, in turn, should assist NGOs in publicising their work.
- *Relation between publicity and transparency of operation of NGOs.* One participant asked whether maybe some NGOs preferred to maintain a lack of transparency for fear that their activities might be questioned.
- *Motivation for the private media sector to support NGO activity.* While a suggestion was made that private television channels cover NGO activities, a

Macedonian participant expressed doubts that private TV stations would broadcast information about an NGO for free. A suggestion was therefore made to have tax benefits for television stations which covered NGO activities.

- *Amount of time allotted to minorities in state media.* Several participants, while underlining that by having separate media for the different ethnic communities barriers between them were being reinforced, also expressed the regret that there was not enough space allotted to Vlachs, ethnic Turks, Roma and ethnic Serbs in state media; while Roma and ethnic Albanians also have their own private television channels, Vlachs and ethnic Turks do not.

3. Summary of Ideas for Projects and Other Initiatives

Some of the preliminary project ideas and other initiatives which emerged already during the working groups and the general roundtable discussions are reported here:

a. Human Rights, Civil Society and Conflict Resolution

- *"Drive safe" project:* a case-study trip on a multi-ethnic bus travelling throughout the country to visit different ethnic communities with the objective of learning about ethnic differences. This could be done under the theme "Drive Safe" and issue a symbolic driving license for driving on multi-ethnic roads.
- *NGO lobby group:* to urge the Macedonian Government to establish a law so that domestic donors get a tax benefit.
- *Multi-ethnic election monitoring:* joint NGO project, including Roma observers, to monitor the upcoming 2001 parliamentary elections.
- *NGO Fundraising Project:* to explore means for NGOs to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

b. Women's Issues

- *Women's participation in political life:* joint campaign in light of the 2001 parliamentary elections to promote the participation of women of from all ethnic backgrounds in political life and to call for increased representation of women in Parliament.

c. *The Media*

- Training:
 - Training of NGOs so that they are better able to publicise their work in the media.
 - Training in better use of electronic media and other electronic resources by NGOs
 - Upgrading of professional standards through education and training.
 - Training in peace journalism.
- Monitoring:
 - Monitoring of the media ("presswatch") for coverage of ethnic issues.
- Cooperation between NGOs and the media:
 - Co-operative NGO projects to break the barriers between the parallel information systems of the media in the FYR of Macedonia, especially those in the Macedonian and Albanian languages, in order to bring ethnic groups together and start a dialogue on taboo issues.
 - Enhance cooperation between the local media and NGOs so that the public is better informed about the work of Macedonian NGOs
 - NGOs to share with other ethnic groups the issues which are only addressed in their "ethnic" media so that persons who do not speak the minority language are able to follow the issues of concern to that ethnic community.
- Information dissemination:
 - Organise a campaign on the decriminalisation of libel for it is incompatible with European standards to deprive a person of freedom for libel.²⁹

d. *General*

- *Creation of an NGO Information Center*

The participants agreed on the need to establish an NGO Information Center where NGOs could exchange information about each other's projects and thereby improve communication amongst themselves. MCIC commented that they had opened one in Skopje which attracted about 100 NGOs during the first year, but then only 20 in the

²⁹ It was noted that this was a general human rights issues and was not specifically related to inter-ethnic relations.

second year. One participant suggested that this might be due to the fact that it was not easily accessible to NGOs outside of Skopje while it was also possible that it had not been advertised well enough.

- *Creation of NGO website and databases.*

MCIC is currently collecting information on all registered NGOs in the country for its NGO database and also in order to update its "Directory of Non-Governmental Organisations in Macedonia". The NGO database will contain about 2000 NGO profiles and will also provides information on projects being carried out. CRFMS is also in the process of establishing a database of NGOs and experts with experience in the field of refugees, forced migration and human rights. Given the great degree of turnover in the NGO sector and given that addresses and telephone numbers are constantly changing, information must be regularly updated. An international expert informed the participants that in Hungary a non-profit information center was being set up with the similar aim of establishing an NGO database. One Macedonian participant reminded the group that lack of access to the Internet might still be a problem for some NGOs.

D. SESSION III: PANEL ON "NGO CAPACITY-BUILDING AND CONDITIONS FOR THE EFFECTIVE USE OF NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES AND ELECTRONIC RESOURCES"

The aim of this panel of experts was to inform participants on how to make better use of electronic resources for their projects and for networking; it was also an opportunity for the experts to obtain feedback from these potential users and to hear more about their needs. Internet connection was available so that the audience could view the websites being introduced.

This panel was proposed and chaired by **Mr Boris Tsilevich**, founding member of MINELRES and member of the National Parliament of Latvia (Riga), who introduced the panel by underlining the necessity for government-minority dialogue and by looking at means to empower minorities so that they can counter claims by the government about their lack of professionalism and also so that they can become

equal partners in the dialogue. He then presented the *MINELRES project on minority human rights in Central and Eastern Europe*, created in 1997 originally as an e-mail list so as to be more easily accessible than a website. Although the target group was Central and East European NGOs, at the beginning 90% of the subscribers were US postgraduate scholars. MINELRES therefore took special measures to promote this resource amongst NGOs. Eventually, MINELRES grew into a web resource containing relevant documents on international organisations, lists and links to websites of relevant NGOs and research organisations, various relevant data structured by country and by minority, selected publications and bibliographies, as well as the list's full mailing archives. The MINELRES team is also in the process of compiling a bilingual database of minority-related national legislation.

MINELRES is a member of the *Consortium of Minority Resources (COMIR)* which was introduced by **Mr William McKinney**, ECMI Electronic Services Librarian (Flensburg). In response to the need for cooperation and co-ordination between various organisations engaged in the development of online resources, networking and dissemination of information on the issues of minority rights, multicultural politics and ethnic relations in CEE and the CIS, COMIR was created in 2000. This is an Internet-based cooperative project that aims at promoting the free flow of information and dialogue concerning inter-ethnic relations, multi-cultural politics and minority rights. COMIR aims to establish a clearing-house of information and activities relevant to Europe (OSCE region).

The founding COMIR organisations are: Balkan Academic News (BAN), CEDIME-SE, Constitutional and Legal Policy Institute (COLPI), ECMI, European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), the Forum Institute, Human Rights Watch, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, LGI Managing Multi-ethnic Communities Project, MINELRES Project, and MRGI. Major initiatives by COMIR partners include a Virtual Library, coordinated mailing lists, a meta-search engine across founders' websites, a Minority Rights Practitioners Resource Pack, a best practice database, curriculum development and advocacy training. COMIR is also in the process of developing a *Minority Researchers' Guide* which is an online database and search engine with direct links to various online resources available on the COMIR founders' websites.

Dr Panayote Elias Dimitras, also a COMIR member through CEDIME-SE, introduced the *Balkan Human Rights Web Pages* which contain announcements, reports and articles issued by human rights organisations concerning the Balkan countries. These web pages may be searched by country, organisation or special issue. The partner organisations of the Balkan Human Rights Web Pages are: the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group International, ERRC, the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, and the South East Europe Media Organisation.

Ms Petra Kovács presented the web pages of LGI's *Innovative Practice Database*. This database contains case studies on innovative practices in the field of community relations in multi-ethnic environments and local initiatives for ethnic conflict resolution. Materials are written by contributors to the case study writing project of LGI's *Managing Multiethnic Communities Project*. The aim of this database is to provide researchers, activists and public officials with a forum to share their experiences in developing innovative strategies to address issues related to the management of multi-ethnic communities. 110 case studies covering 19 countries are available thus far. Two criteria must be met for a case study to be included: it must be innovative, and it must be a "good" (but not necessarily a successful) initiative. In autumn 1999, LGI / Managing Multiethnic Communities and the Center for European Migration and Ethnic Studies engaged into a partnership to update and maintain the database. The Roundtable participants were encouraged to send case studies from FYR of Macedonia.

Ms Brigitte Alfter, correspondent for the newspaper of the Danish minority in Germany, *Flensborg Avis*, presented the *EUROLANG minority newsagency* which is an internet-based news agency for linguistic minorities established in February 2000 in Brussels and financed by the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) with the support of the European Commission. EUROLANG covers minority language issues in all parts of the EU and its institutions in Brussels, thus aiming to fill the gap in media coverage of these important issues. EUROLANG thus reflects the concerns of almost 40 million people throughout the EU, and millions

more in applicant countries. This service is free of charge, and serves the national media across Europe as well as the minority and regional language media. Ms Alfter also mentioned the *Association of Minority Daily Newspapers in Europe*, a network of 35 newspapers (most of them from EU countries but they are also trying to get CEE members to join). Thus far, two preparatory conferences have been held and an association will be formed in April 2001. The Association faces the same obstacles as EUROLANG: a limited target group and limited financial means.

In the **discussion**, several questions were raised concerning the reliability of sources used in electronic resources on minorities and the criteria used by the moderators of electronic news lists and web resources. Another issue raised was the financial constraints on Internet access and the lack of funding for NGOs to get access.

E. CLOSING SESSION

1. The Stability Pact Declaration on NGO-Government Partnership in South-Eastern Europe

In the final session, **Ms Anca Ciuca** (also representing the Romanian co-chairmanship of SP WT1 which had initiated the project to adopt a Charter for NGO Participation in the SP) gave an overview of the process lasting from July-October 2000 which resulted in the adoption of the *"Stability Pact Declaration on NGO-Government Partnership in South-Eastern Europe"* (Annex C) at the third meeting of the Stability Pact Working Table on Human Rights and Democratisation (Bucharest, 27 October 2000).

Ms Ciuca compared this final document to an earlier draft *"Charter for NGOs Participation in the Stability Pact"*, dated 28 August 2000 (Annex D), which was the result of the work of many NGOs through an e-group which had been set up by the Romanian co-chairmanship of WT1 to this effect. Indeed, the participation of civil society in the implementation of the SP became one of the priorities of the Romanian co-chairmanship of WT1. This draft was sent out to NGOs in the whole SP region. A meeting was then organised in September to discuss the draft Charter and prepare it for adoption at the plenary evaluation meeting of WT1 in October.

Very few NGO reactions were received whereas many governments responded. The final document adopted was therefore a declaration on NGO-Government partnership rather than a charter on NGO participation in the SP. The Stability Pact Declaration differed from the draft NGO Charter in several aspects. Three provisions of the draft NGO Charter were missing in the SP Declaration.³⁰

- A provision in the preamble concerning the establishment of effective channels of communication and consultation between the SP structure and regional civil society and giving NGOs and civil society equal chances:

"... attach particular importance to establishing effective channels of communication and appropriate mechanisms of consultation between the Stability Pact structure and regional civil society, and to giving equal chances to NGOs and civic initiatives involved in local, regional or national cooperation, by taking into account the different needs and levels of development of the civil society in the countries of the region, ..." (Charter for NGOs Participation in the Stability Pact, 28 August 2000).

- A provision on states to support civil society to become self-sustainable:

"3. Support NGO capacity-building by ensuring the existence, through regulation or self-regulation, of standards of internal governance and external accountability that will help NGOs build public trust and develop into mature, self-governed institutions able to respond appropriately to the needs of their constituencies." (Charter for NGOs Participation in the Stability Pact, 28 August 2000)

- Finally, a government statement on racism, xenophobia and violence:

"10. Apply, or where necessary enact, laws relating to activities or actions of the NGOs that are unlawful acts of racism, xenophobia or violence. Such laws should be narrowly and clearly defined, requiring a direct connection between the activity or action and an unlawful act." (Charter for NGOs Participation in the Stability Pact, 28 August 2000)

However, the Participating States also declared that they were willing to support NGOs. This document could therefore be used by NGOs to exert pressure on governments to support their efforts.

³⁰ Furthermore, many of the other provisions in the draft Charter were toned down. Rather than "guarantee" the Participating States in the SP will "facilitate and promote the free development of NGOs..." (para. 9); rather than "adopt, amend or implement legislation with a view to establishing a receptive environment for NGOs ..." they will "Support the adoption, amendment or implementation of legislation ..." (para. 10); and rather than "Sustain..." they prefer to "Encourage the involvement of NGOs in activities aimed at promoting transparency and dialogue, inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony and the values of tolerance and multiculturalism (para. 11)" [FD].

In the **discussion**, one Macedonian participant agreed that this was a significant initiative for governments had shown willingness to cooperate with NGOs, as they had done during the refugee crisis. However, he expressed scepticism concerning the SP, which he believes is not the best approach. For example, if the FYR of Macedonia attempts to change its tax law to the benefit of donors then this might be later rejected by the IMF. He therefore recommended lobbying international monetary institutions rather than the Macedonian Government. He further urged NGOs to approach the SP institutions directly, and not through their respective governments.

2. Issues Discussed in the Closing Session

a. Aims of the NGO Roundtable

Ms Farimah Daftary, ECMI Research Associate, responded to a request for further clarification by restating the aims of the NGO Roundtable:

- Networking among NGOs with a common interest in resolving inter-ethnic issues
- Identification of common aims for joint action
- Joining of forces to further common aims
- Formulation of ideas and proposals for joint projects between Macedonian NGOs

b. Membership of the NGO Roundtable and Criteria

The group of 20 NGOs which attended this first meeting could be considered as the core of the NGO Roundtable. However, this is not intended as an exclusive initiative; rather, the aim is to involve a broader group of NGOs, provided that they adhere to the basic aims of the project, i.e. that they are willing to join forces in order to contribute to the resolution of some of the inter-ethnic problems which their country is facing. Furthermore, some of the NGOs invited were not able to come to Flensburg for personal or other reasons. Finally, a requirement of fluency in English had to be imposed for this first meeting in order to have a more informal atmosphere (still, some interpretation had to be provided). The organisers realise that this might have been an impediment to the participation of some NGOs. Therefore, it is expected that membership of the Roundtable will be expanded to about 30 NGOs for the second meeting of the NGO Roundtable in spring 2001. Naturally, once the NGO Network is set up in an electronic form there need not be any limitations to the number of NGOs wishing to join. The following *criteria for membership in the NGO Roundtable* were

suggested by Dr Najčevská: capacity, expertise, and linkages with other NGOs, as a testimony to the desire to cooperate. It was also suggested that the Macedonian Government also be represented in the Roundtable through the institution of the Ombudsman.

c. "Area Coordinators" and Their Tasks

Ms Daftary also explained the idea behind the Area Coordinators which is to establish a de-centralised structure for an effective dissemination of information and detailed discussion of joint project ideas in each of the three issue areas: (a) human rights, civil society and conflict prevention, (b) women's issues, and (c) the media. These organisations will not be designated by the organisers beforehand so that their selection is open and transparent to the greatest possible extent. The overall task of the Area Coordinators will be to facilitate the process of communication with the ECMI focal point and of formulating joint project proposals and other ideas for cooperation between NGOs. More specifically, they will collect nominations for additional NGOs to be included in the NGO Roundtable and organise and host meetings to discuss project ideas in between meetings of the NGO Roundtable.

These Area Coordinators will therefore serve a particularly important function of maintaining the momentum of the project in the interim phases between roundtable meetings by remaining in contact with the participating NGOs and acting as focal points for discussion and collecting ideas and proposals as specified at the roundtable meetings. In the longer term, it is envisaged that the three NGOs acting as Area Coordinators will be instrumental in setting up the *NGO Network on Inter-Ethnic Relations in Southeastern Europe* by becoming members of its Steering Committee.

Contrary to the expectation that there would not be many NGOs volunteering to take on this essentially administrative task, the issue of the Area Coordinators turned out to be a point of contention, possibly because this position was associated by some of the participants with a guarantee for subsequent project funding. Given the great desire of many of the NGOs present to take on this responsibility, and also because it was decided that it would be more equitable to wait until the membership of the Roundtable was expanded, it was decided that it would be premature to attempt to select the three Area Coordinators in Flensburg as originally planned. The Roundtable

organisers offered instead to collect nominations and wait until the second meeting of the Roundtable in April 2001, once issues related to membership and priority areas of action had been resolved. Furthermore, CRFMS offered to act as the local partner and advisor for the project during the interim period until the next meeting.

3. Tasks for the Next Meeting of the NGO Roundtable

Ms Daftary then proceeded to review the tasks to be accomplished before the next meeting of the Roundtable, scheduled to be held in April 2001 in the FYR of Macedonia (exact location to be decided). The following topics were addressed:

1. Nominations for additional NGOs to include at the second roundtable meeting in spring 2001.
2. Collection of additional ideas and proposals for joint projects in each of the three areas.
3. Collection of suggestions for topics of interest to be addressed at the next meeting in April 2001.
4. Collection of Nominations for Area Coordinators

It was decided that the first three tasks would be co-ordinated by ECMI and the local partner in Skopje between January and April. The fourth would be decided upon at the April meeting.

IV. CONCLUSION

As the intense discussions of the participating Macedonian NGOs demonstrated, there is a true commitment to overcoming the divisions within the "Friendly Young Republic of Macedonia" (as some participants preferred to call it), as well as a desire to work together to achieve these aims. Two main challenges which emerged at this first meeting of the Roundtable was both the *need to learn how to interact with people from different ethnic backgrounds* and the difficulty for the participants from different backgrounds and NGOs to identify *common challenges*. One participant expressed the realistic view that there are some common issues where cooperation is possible but not on all.

There are many *obstacles which NGOs face in their daily work*, including lack of communication, lack of resources and lack of experience with the Internet and other electronic resources. There are also many stereotypes to be overcome in seeking to promote inter-ethnic communication and to improve inter-ethnic relations in this multi-ethnic country. Furthermore, NGOs outside Skopje feel marginalised.

One obvious conclusion to be drawn from the interest exhibited by the NGOs in each other's work is that there is a great need for *increased networking between NGOs* with similar interests. Similarly, there is a need for *increased networking with international NGOs and other institutions*. Another major area for improvement concerns *training* in different sectors, e.g. training for journalists on how to cover minority issues, NGO managers and other target groups. *Enhanced access to electronic facilities and better knowledge of available resources* is also a priority area. Access to e-mail and the Internet is still a problem for many NGOs, as is the lack of experience in setting up websites and in using electronic resources. These remedies (NGO websites, NGO networks and other electronic means of communication) are particularly important in overcoming the obstacles mentioned above.

NGOs would especially benefit from *timely and verified information on international funding sources* and from sharing knowledge between themselves about sources of funding. This also brings up *the need for support and knowledge-sharing in project development*, especially between more experienced NGOs and newer ones.

The Flensburg meeting was a first step towards addressing these issues and possible remedies in the form of projects and other initiatives. A major outcome was that the participants agreed to adopt a declaration on their commitment to the aims of working jointly to implement the Stability Pact and to develop joint projects with the aim of improving inter-ethnic relations and inter-ethnic communication. A draft was later circulated via e-mail and adopted by consensus (Annexes A and B). Furthermore, the participants unanimously expressed their interest in convening at the next meeting of the NGO Roundtable in April 2001 in the FYR of Macedonia, which would involve a larger group of NGOs from the entire country.

ANNEX A

DECLARATION

**OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE NGO ROUNDTABLE
ON “INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE FYR OF MACEDONIA”
ORGANISED BY THE EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES (ECMI)**

(European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg, Germany, 10-13 December 2000)

On 10-13 December 2000, the first meeting of the NGO Roundtable was held in Flensburg in a spirit of constructive co-operation.

All those present at that meeting (see List of Participants attached) expressed their unanimous support for the aims of the Stability Pact for South East Europe and their willingness to collaborate with one another in support of these aims.

Furthermore, the participants call upon the Participating States of the Stability Pact to consider the possibility of setting up effective channels of communication and appropriate mechanisms of consultation which will enable NGOs and civil society from South East Europe to have direct access to the Stability Pact and especially to Working Table 1 on Human Rights and Democratization.

The Macedonian NGOs present at the roundtable embraced the following principles and plan of action, to be developed further at a follow-on meeting:

1. The NGO community plays a crucial role in the retrenchment of democracy, human rights, social and economic development and justice in South Eastern Europe. The NGO Roundtable serves to assist NGOs to exercise that role in accordance with the principles of tolerance, mutual trust, effectiveness and transparency.
2. The NGO Roundtable will establish a structure to assist NGOs in generating projects formulated in line with these principles. Inter-ethnic cooperation towards these aims is particularly encouraged.
3. The ECMI Facilitators will, in close cooperation with a local project partner, establish an electronic network for consultation among member NGOs and a web-based resource centre for cooperative project development.
4. ECMI will also make provision for direct assistance to member NGOs in their drafting of project proposals through its own staff and through the establishment of links to funding agencies, including the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.
5. In addition to NGOs present at the first roundtable meeting, others will be invited to contribute to the follow-on process, to be arranged at the second meeting of the roundtable, to be held in the Republic of Macedonia in April 2001.

Flensburg, Germany
5 February 2001

ANNEX B

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

- **MACEDONIAN NGO EXPERTS:**

Kalin Babuscu	Project Officer, Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC) (Skopje)
Sevda Deari	President, Organisation of Turkish Youth of Macedonia "RUMELI" (Skopje)
Zoran Dimov	Director, Roma International Center in Macedonia (Skopje)
Iskra Evrosimovska	International Center for Preventive Action and Conflict Resolution (ICPCR) (Skopje)
Marjan Josifoski	President, European Centre for Integration (ECI) – Macedonia (Skopje)
Nikolina Kenig	Acting Director, Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project, Faculty of Philosophy, Sts Cyril and Methodius University (Skopje)
Blerim Koljali	Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, Sts. Cyril and Methodius University (Skopje)
Ilija Manasiev	Secretary General, Association of European Student Structures (AEGEE) - Skopje (Skopje)
Azdrijan Memedov	Organisation for Youth Initiatives "PONTI" (Skopje)
Ismet Muhic	Project Manager, Center for Multicultural Understanding and Cooperation (Skopje)
Olga Murdzeva-Skaric	President, Union of Women's Organisations of the Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)
Albert Musliu	Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI) (Gostivar)
Mirjana Najčevska	Director, Center for Human Rights, Center for Refugees and Forced Migration Studies, Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, Sts. Cyril and Methodius University; Macedonian Helsinki Committee (Skopje)
Mirjana Nikolovska	Union for Culture of the Vlach in Macedonia (Skopje)
Stanka Novaković	President, Association of the Women Serbs in the Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)
Elena Papacafa	President, Association of Vlach Women in Macedonia (Skopje)
Nadire Selman	President, Association of Roma Women (ESMA) (Skopje)
Sebihana Skenderovska	Project Manager, Roma Community Center "DROM" (Kumanovo)
Muhamed Toci	Member of the Presidency, Humanitarian and Charitable Association of Roma "Mesečina" (Gostivar)
Zaneta Trajkoska	Project Manager, Macedonian Press Center (Skopje)

Sunoor Verma	International Consultant on Project Management, Center for Refugees and Forced Migration Studies, Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, Sts. Cyril and Methodius University (Skopje)
Zekir Zekiri	"MULTIKULTURA" (Tetovo)
• INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS:	
Erik André Andersen	Project Coordinator, Balkan Human Rights Network, Danish Center for Human Rights (Copenhagen)
Tore Bøgh	Ambassador of Norway en Mission Spéciale (Oslo); ECMI Board Member
Anca Ciuca	Foundation for Democratic Change (Bucharest)
Farimah Daftary	ECMI Research Associate (Flensburg)
Panayote Elias Dimitras	Greek Helsinki Monitor, Minority Rights Group-Greece (Athens)
Hans-Peter Furrer	Director of Political Affairs, Council of Europe (Strasbourg); ECMI Board Member
Lars Funch Hansen	Project Coordinator, South East European Refugee Assistance Network (SEE-RAN), Danish Refugee Council (Copenhagen)
Jesper Højbjerg	Project Consultant for South Eastern Europe, Secretariat for Peace and Stability (FRESTA), Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Copenhagen)
Priit Järve	ECMI Senior Analyst (Flensburg)
Petra Kovács	Research Associate, Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Institute - Hungary (Budapest)
William McKinney	ECMI Electronic Services Librarian (Flensburg)
Boris Tsilevich	Member of the National Parliament of Latvia; Founder of the MINELRES Project on Minority Human Rights in Central and Eastern Europe (Riga)
Marc Weller	ECMI Director (Flensburg)

ANNEX C

STABILITY PACT DECLARATION ON NGO-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

The Participating States in the Stability Pact and the interested parties and organisations associated with the Pact:

Acknowledging that regional NGOs and civic initiatives play a key role in the process of democratisation, peace-building, promotion and protection of human rights, as well as the development of cross-border cooperation in South Eastern Europe and in carrying forward the spirit and values of the Stability Pact,

Taking into consideration that, by supporting and representing diverse individuals and groups and by strengthening communities, many independent, not-for profit organisations in South East Europe bring enormous value to society and fulfil a role complementing the state and the market, and that voluntary and community activity is fundamental to the development of a democratic, socially inclusive society,

Recognising that it is practically impossible to have a thriving and efficient NGO sector without respect for the rule of law and a stable social and political environment,

Reaffirm their adherence to the principle of freedom of association as laid down in Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 20 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the principles of the UN Declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as all relevant OSCE commitments.

Are determined to direct efforts to help NGOs and civic initiatives in the region strengthen their capacities and promote exchange programmes, cross-border contacts and experience-sharing among NGOs, as well as facilitate greater involvement of the NGOs in each Task Force,

Are committed to facilitating the identification of best practices implemented throughout the region and to produce an on-line inventory of regional cross-border projects already existing or in progress.

The Governments in the region, in order to promote greater NGO involvement in Stability Pact activities, will:

Facilitate and promote the free development of NGOs and other civic initiatives and ensure that civic involvement in society remains unrestricted and is encouraged.

Support the adoption, amendment or implementation of legislation with a view to establish a receptive environment for NGOs, allowing them to be created without obstacles and to operate freely,

Encourage the involvement of NGOs in activities aimed at promoting transparency and dialogue, inter-religious and interethnic harmony and the values of tolerance and multiculturalism.

Promote an increased participation of citizens and residents in political and social affairs by

incorporating education for democracy and social responsibility in the education system and by supporting NGOs' public awareness-raising activities.

Facilitate NGO's direct and indirect (inter alia through tax benefits) access to funds, whether from private or state sources.

Ensure that access to funding for NGOs remains unimpeded and legitimate restrictions by governments on access to foreign funds are crafted in line with internationally recognised standards.

Support the creation of NGO networks in South-Eastern Europe and promote a regional approach to civic action, thus fostering communication, cooperation and the exchange of best practices between the countries of the region.

Improve communication between public administration and NGOs to ensure transparency of the administration and the legislative process, as a means to increase citizens' confidence in the activities of public institutions and to eliminate bureaucratic sources of corruption.

Promote state-NGO partnerships and develop mechanisms for the engagement and consultation of NGOs on a sustained and systematic basis, in areas where NGOs have experience and which directly affect their work and constituencies. Such mechanisms will respect the diversity of opinions on both sides, ensure openness of communication, and be based on agreed ground rules of engagement.

Bucharest, 27 October 2000

ANNEX D

CHARTER FOR NGOS PARTICIPATION IN THE STABILITY PACT

(Draft)

The Participating States in the Stability Pact and the interested parties and organisations associated with the Pact,

acknowledging that regional NGOs and civic initiatives play a key role in the process of democratization, peace-building and the development of cross-border cooperation in South Eastern Europe and in carrying forward the spirit and values of the Stability Pact,

taking into consideration that, by supporting and representing diverse individuals and groups and by strengthening communities, many independent, not-for-profit organisations in South Eastern Europe bring enormous value to society and fulfil a role complementing the state and the market, and that voluntary and community activity is fundamental to the development of a democratic, socially inclusive society,

recognizing that it is practically impossible to have a thriving NGO sector and a functioning civil society without the rule of law and a stable social and political environment:

reaffirm their adherence to the principles of freedom of association as laid down in Article 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) and related hereto, Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Article 20 of the universal Declaration of Human Rights.

attach particular importance to establishing effective channels of communication and appropriate mechanisms of consultation between the Stability Pact structure and regional civil society, and to giving equal chances to NGOs and civic initiatives involved in local, regional or national cooperation, by taking into account the different needs and levels of development of the civil society in the countries of the region,

are determined to direct efforts to help NGOs and civic initiatives in the region strengthen their capacities and promote exchange programs, cross-border contacts and experience-sharing among NGOs, as well as facilitate greater involvement of the NGOs in each Task Force of Working Table 1,

are committed to facilitating the identification of best practices implemented throughout the region and to produce an on-line inventory of regional cross-border projects already existing or in progress.

The Governments in the region, in order to promote a greater NGO involvement in Stability Pact activities, will:

1. Guarantee the free development of NGOs and other civic initiatives and ensure that civic involvement in society remains unrestricted and is encouraged.

2. Adopt, amend or implement legislation with a view to establishing a receptive environment for NGOs, allowing them to be created without obstacles and to operate freely.
3. Support NGO capacity-building by ensuring the existence, through regulation or self-regulation, of standards of internal governance and external accountability that will help NGOs build public trust and develop into mature, self-governed institutions able to respond appropriately to the needs of their constituencies.
4. Sustain the involvement of NGOs in activities aimed at promoting transparency and dialogue, inter-religious and interethnic harmony and the values of tolerance and multiculturalism. Promote an increased participation of citizens in political and social affairs by incorporating education for democracy and social responsibility in the education system and by supporting NGOs' public awareness-raising activities.
5. Facilitate NGO's direct and indirect (through tax benefits) access to funds, whether from private or state sources.
6. Ensure that access to funding for NGOs remains unimpeded and legitimate restrictions by governments on access to foreign funds are crafted in line with internationally recognized standards. At the same time, NGOs must be accountable for their financial operations in accordance with internal legislation, operating in a not-for-profit basis and must avoid in engaging in activities that would create a conflict of interest.
7. Support the creation of NGO networks in South-East Europe and promote a regional approach to civic action, thus fostering communication, cooperation and the exchange of best practices between the countries of the region.
8. Establish institutional mechanisms to improve communication between public administration and NGOs to ensure transparency of the administration and the legislative process, as a means to increase citizens' confidence in the activities of public institutions and to eliminate bureaucratic sources of corruption.
9. Promote state-NGO partnerships and develop mechanisms for the engagement and consultation of civil society on a sustained and systematic basis, in areas where they have experience and which directly affect their work and constituencies. Such mechanisms will respect the diversity of opinions on both sides, ensure openness of communication, and be based on agreed ground rules of engagement.
10. Apply, or where necessary enact, laws relating to activities or actions of the NGOs that are unlawful acts of racism, xenophobia or violence. Such laws should be narrowly and clearly defined, requiring a direct connection between the activity or action and an unlawful act.

August 28, 2000

ANNEX E

PROFILE OF PARTICIPATING MACEDONIAN NGOS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS³¹

ASSOCIATION FOR DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVES (ADI)

Borche Jovanoski 61
MK-91230 Gostivar
Tel: +389-42 22 11 00
Fax: +389-42 221 102
e-mail: adi@adi.org.mk
Website: www.adi.org.mk

ADI, a multiethnic organisation devoted to building a civic society in Macedonia and in the region, was established in Gostivar in 1994. It originated as a core group of 30 volunteers conducting voter education activities during the 1994 national elections and the 1996 local elections; it is now represented in 32 towns and employs 23 full-time staff. There is also an ADI Office in Prishtina. ADI has received funding from many sources including USAID, Catholic Relief Services, Freedom House, ICRC, Open Society Institute, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, as well as various government and private donors.

Projects:

ADI runs a variety of programmes in areas as diverse as refugees, local government, civic and voter education, inter-ethnic relations, human rights and youth. In addition, ADI has opened two NGO Resource Centers in Gostivar and Štip which offer computer and foreign language courses and legal advisory and assistance services. In the field of inter-ethnic relations, ADI has conducted several projects to promote the appreciation of similarities rather than differences among the various ethnic groups. ADI has published a booklet in three languages to be used as a teaching tool and which illustrates the common history of ethnic Albanians, Macedonians, Turks and Roma residing in the country. Debate clubs for children and youth from different ethnic backgrounds are also organised. Another ADI project examines statistics on the percentage of ethnic Albanians employed by international organisations in the country for under-representation of ethnic Albanians, according to ADI, significantly affects the distribution of resources and thus the economic rights of ethnic Albanians.

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN STUDENT STRUCTURES (AEGEE) - SKOPJE

Praven Fakultet
Sts. Cyril and Methodius University
bul. Krste Misirkov b.b.
MK-1000 Skopje
Fax: +389-2 237 965
e-mail: aegee@pf.ukim.edu.mk
Website: www.aegee.org

AEGEE is a student organisation that promotes the idea of a unified Europe, assisted by an unmatched personal network of European friends. AEGEE was founded in 1985 in Paris and has over 15,000 members in more than 200 university cities all over Europe. AEGEE-Skopje was founded in 1993 and is composed of several working groups on Human Rights, the

³¹ These profiles have been compiled on the basis of information provided by the participating NGOs themselves.

Environment, East-West, and Education. AEGEE-Skopje also has a debate club and publishes a magazine, "Europe, no borders, no limits".

Projects:

Projects have included summer universities, winter universities and various seminars and conferences including "Privatisation in Central and Eastern Europe" (1995), Visions for the 21st Century (1998), "The Macedonian Way to the European Union" (1999). Another conference in which AEGEE-Skopje was involved in the context of the Balkan Youth Network was "Balkan Idea" (Ohrid, May 2000), with the support of the European Cultural Foundation and the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe. AEGEE-Skopje has also organised panel discussions on human rights, democracy, minorities and the future of the EU.

ASSOCIATION OF ROMA WOMEN (ESMA)

Ul. 1213, No. 18^A
Šuto Orizari
MK-1000 Skopje
Fax: +389-2 652 202

ASSOCIATION OF VLACH WOMEN IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Cvetan Dimov 4/3/11
MK-1000 Skopje
Tel: +389-2 145188; 227 353
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Founded in 1995, its main objectives are to fight for peace, against violence and for equality of the sexes as well as to improve the position and role of women and their greater participation in government and decision-making and in cultural life. The Association's activities include poetry evenings, exhibitions, folklore, festivals, publication of children's and adult books in the Vlach language, cooperation with all associations. The Association of Vlach Women in the Republic of Macedonia is a member of the International Vlach organisation based in Freiburg, Germany.

Projects

The Association issues its own bulletin on its activities "Macedonian Vlach Woman" in the Vlach language. It has also issued a short anthology of 8 Vlach women poets (1999) and two other books (one is a book of children's poetry, "Star", by Anita Dragovic; the other, "Folk traditions of Meglen", Dionisie Papacafa and financed by the Ministry of Culture. The Association also took part in an International festival of poets and painters (Iash, Romania, October 2000) and an International Festival of poets and painters (Skopje, November 2000). Planned projects in 2001 are also in the field of publishing.

ASSOCIATION OF THE WOMEN SERBS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

11 Oktomvri 17/2/11
MK-1000 Skopje
Tel: +389-2 21 21 46
Tel/Fax: +389-2 12 61 85
e-mail: stanka9@yahoo.com

The Association of the Women Serbs in the Republic of Macedonia, which was established in 1992 and officially registered in 1995, is part of the umbrella organisation Union of Women's Organisation of Macedonia together with 53 NGOs and associations. The aim of the Association is to improve the equal status and treatment of women in society, the realisation

of women's rights, the promotion of peace and non-violence, and the elimination of racism and intolerance.

Many activities over the past three years related to the provision of humanitarian help to refugees from Yugoslavia.

CENTER FOR MULTICULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION (CMUC)

'29 Noemvri' 4b

MK-1000 Skopje

Tel/Fax: +389-2 13 04 07

e-mail: kim@unet.com.mk

This organisation is dedicated to the promotion of inter-ethnic, inter-faith, and inter-cultural tolerance and cooperation and seeks to create mutual understanding and respect among all ethnic and religious groups in the country. CMUC defines itself as an institution which considers ethnic rights and freedoms as non-restrictive natural rights and believes that no individual rights are possible unless the issue of collective rights is resolved. CMUC is supported by a range of donors including Catholic Relief Services, Idee, the King Baudoin Foundation, the Olof Palme International Center, idee, etc.

Projects:

CMUC works especially in the area of media, conducting training seminars for young journalists and publishing a handbook for journalists in Macedonian and in Albanian on multicultural reporting. CMUC also held a summer school in 1999 for democracy and educating young NGO activists. Another group of projects seek to promote equality between the sexes and greater involvement of women in political life. A seminar on Women and the Political Processes was organised in Tetovo and Gostivar in 1998.

CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research,

Sts. Cyril and Methodius University

bul. Partizanski odredi b.b.

PO Box 435

MK-1000 Skopje

Tel: +389-2 365 195

Fax: +389-2 390 447

e-mail: chr@isppi.ukim.edu.mk, najce@isppi.ukim.edu.mk

The Center for Human Rights was established in 1998 as an independent research unit in the framework of the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research. Its aims are to focus academic interest in the country on human rights and freedoms and seeks to link research and practice.

The activities of the Center concern the following:

- Research in human rights theory and international legislation, and specifically the promotion and protection of human rights in FYR of Macedonia.
- Education: publications for human rights training at the primary, secondary and graduate levels; lectures, seminars, etc, for state administration, journalists, lawyers, teachers, NGO activists, etc.
- Consultation services to institutions and individuals dealing with human rights issues.
- Communication: cooperation with similar institutions throughout the country and outside through comparative research on practice and implementation.
- The Center is also preparing a database of institutions and individuals dealing with human rights issues.

Projects

The Center recently organised a seminar on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Ohrid, September 1999), as well as a series of lectures on “Democracy, Human Rights, Tolerance and Minority Issues”. Among the current projects of the Center is a proposal to create a network of Roma non-governmental organisations as a framework for lobbying in favour of the Roma. The Center for Human Rights is directed by Dr. Mirjana Najčevska.

CENTER FOR REFUGEES AND FORCED MIGRATION STUDIES (CRFMS)

Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research,
Sts. Cyril and Methodius University (Skopje)
bul. Partizanski odredi b.b.
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e-mail: crfms@mol.com.mk

CRFMS was established in 1998 as a research and consulting unit within the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research (ISPJR) at the University of Sts Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. It has an inter-disciplinary approach utilising the resources of the other six research institutes under the ISPJR. The aim of CRFMS is to establish itself as a leading regional resource center in the field of refugee and forced migration studies and to promote the standards of excellence in research on these subjects. It seeks to achieve this aim by fostering a regional network of research institutes and academics. CRFMS has six main areas of activity: research; training; publications; advocacy; database creation and linkages.

Projects:

CRFMS organises training courses on refugee and forced migration issues, and is also developing a curriculum for a graduate degree in this field. Another project is to establish a database of organisations and individuals working in the region on issues of interest to the Center. A library is also being built.

ETHNIC CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROJECT (ECRP)

Faculty of Philosophy, Sts Cyril and
Methodius University (Skopje)
bul. Krste Misirkov b.b.
MK-1000 Skopje
Tel/Fax: +389-2 131 388
e-mail: v.p.beska@ukim.edu.mk

This joint project with Search for Common Ground in Macedonia was established in 1994, with the support of the Ministry of Education, at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sts Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje. Its overall goal is to launch a culture of peaceful conflict resolution. ECRP activities are focused on four domains: educational programs and support literature; training in communication and conflict resolution; scientific research in the areas of ethnicity and its impact on inter-ethnic relations in the country; and consultations.

Projects:

The aim of the “*MOZAIK*” *inter-ethnic kindergarten project*, a joint project with SCGM, is exposure to the language as well as to the culture of the other group through bilingual kindergartens with a group of 50% ethnic Macedonian and 50% ethnic Albanian children and four teachers (2 ethnic Macedonians and 2 ethnic Albanians) who address the children using their own mother tongue strictly. The children also exercise group decision-making and are encouraged to take initiatives. There are currently 3 schools (1 in Skopje, 2 in Kumanovo) and 3 more will be opened (in Gostivar, Debar and Struga). Thanks to Swiss funding, parents

pay the same as for regular kindergartens and there is already a long waiting list. Teachers are trained in conflict resolution prior to the start of the classes. It is hoped that an option at the Pedagogical Faculty will be introduced for future teachers in inter-ethnic kindergartens.

Conflict Resolution Games is a joint project with SCGM. Now in its fifth year, it is offered in nearly 100 schools, involving a year-long curriculum of games that teachers conduct weekly. The games are designed to help children identify what conflict is, how it grows and how it can be resolved. Children are taught to develop self-respect as a basis for respecting others, the practice of taking responsibility for their own actions rather than blaming others, and an understanding of seeing the other's point of view rather than dismissing it out of hand. *Understanding Conflicts* is another training programme designed to offer basic knowledge about conflicts and to incorporate the "culture for constructive and peaceful conflict resolution" into schools as well as into the everyday life of students and teachers in elementary and high schools, parents, as well as university students who want to become teachers. The two programmes are supported by the Catholic Relief Services and, through SCGM, by the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands, the Swedish International Development Agency, and the Swiss Bureau for Development and Cooperation. *Multicultural Education in High School* is yet another joint project with SCGM which seeks to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices amongst high school students using multicultural education materials with the aim to help students appreciate the differences of people from other cultural groups. The curriculum is conducted in a camp format for six days, as well as outreach activities in schools.

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR INTEGRATION (ECI)- MACEDONIA

Ruger Boskovic 11, 2/20

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e-mail: ECI_mkd@yahoo.com

ECI- Macedonia is a union of 11 separate, independent NGOs from the FYR of Macedonia working under the co-ordination of an executive committee. It is now a non-profit, non-governmental organisation whose main aims are to:

- Promote democracy and civil society
- Assist in basic needs
- Promote peace and free will
- Develop cooperation among people with different ethnic and national backgrounds
- Develop cooperation amongst organisations and associations outside and inside Macedonia
- Care for youth standards

ECI - Macedonia is a partner organisation in the Southeast European Youth Council.

Projects:

ECI-Macedonia has so far realised the project "Citizens for Citizens", "Lake Ohrid - Lake Champlane", "Give a Hand to the one who needs", etc.

HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (MHC)

Ul. Dame Gruev 28

P.O. Box 58

MK-1000 Skopje

Tel/Fax: +389-2 119 373

e-mail: helkom@soros.org.mk

website: <http://www.mhc.org.mk/>

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republic of Macedonia was founded in October 1994 in Skopje. Since 1995 it has been a regular member of the International Helsinki Federation (IHF) which is composed of national committees from 39 countries. It thus enjoys advisory status in the United Nations and the Council of Europe. The aim of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee is to observe and inform, on the local and international levels, about respect for the human rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and other documents.

The Macedonian Helsinki Committee organises seminars and other events aimed at raising awareness about human rights. The Helsinki Committee also provides legal help in the field of human rights protection and monitors court proceedings.

Projects

Among past projects, the MHC organised a series of training workshops entitled *Lawyers for Human Rights* to acquaint the participants with important international human rights standards. These participants then established themselves as a group to further help the MHC. MHC also publishes *Helsinki Monitor* as well as regular reports on human rights in the Republic of Macedonia.

HUMANITARIAN AND CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION OF ROMA "MESEČINA" (GOSTIVAR)

Zivko Brajkovski b.b.

MK-91230 Gostivar

Tel: +389-42 222 271

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e-mail: mesečina@mt.net.mk

HCRA Mesečina - Gostivar was founded in September 1993 by Romani intellectuals in Gostivar as a non-governmental, non-political and non-partisan organisation of an exclusively humanitarian and charitable character which makes no distinction on the basis of race, sex, religion, or political creed. The vision of HCRA Mesečina - Gostivar is social and educational emancipation in order to give marginalized groups the same starting position as other groups in society. Its mission is the development of material and human resources, distribution of these resources to socially and economically marginalized families throughout a wide variety of activities. Currently, apart from Gostivar, there are also offices in the Western Macedonian cities of Tetovo, Kičevo and Debar. There are plans to open branches throughout the country. HCRA Mesečina - Gostivar is funded by nine foundations.

Projects

The work of HCRA Mesečina - Gostivar is divided into six sectors: education; supplementary education and emancipation of marginalized groups; economic integration of marginalized groups; inter-ethnic tolerance; public awareness-raising and participation in politics; cooperation and co-ordination in the Republic of Macedonia and abroad; and emergency aid. In the education sector, projects have focussed on getting increased enrolment of the Romani population at all levels through direct aid (materials, funding) and other programmes; under inter-ethnic tolerance, projects have aimed at fostering the respect of differences and eliminating prejudices and stereotypes, e.g. the multiethnic project *Tolerance and Esteem of Differences – An Entry Precondition Together in the 21st Century* (January – June 2000) which brought together youth from different ethnic backgrounds (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serb and Roma) with the aim to socialise through debates, workshops, computer training, etc. A code for inter-ethnic cooperation among NGOs in Gostivar has also been developed. HCRA Mesečina - Gostivar is also involved in a Balkan network of Romani NGOs.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR PREVENTIVE ACTION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION (ICPCR)

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ICPCR was founded and endorsed by a government resolution in February 2000. The structure of ICPCR consists of an Executive Board, initially comprised of representatives of the government ministries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Internal Affairs) and from the Faculty of Law, to be gradually supplemented with a number of persons acting in their own capacity. There will also be three advisory committees: International Committee (relevant international organisations), the Academic Committee and the NGO Committee. ICPCR is thus a semi-governmental foundation but constitutes a separate legal entity, under the acting directorship of Professor Sašo Georgievski.

The ICPCR is devoted to:

- promoting education and training of public officers and students in preventive action and conflict resolution;
- promoting research, exchange of information and dialogue on prevention and conflict resolution;
- examining relevant issues related to inter-ethnic relations, initiate dialogue and develop forms, strategies for improving local and regional inter-ethnic tolerance;
- developing potential and promote means for regional stability and cooperation.
- disseminating information and policy recommendations on local and regional aspects of prevention and conflict resolution.

Activities will be conducted in the following areas:

- Human rights, in particular the inter-ethnic dimension of human rights.
- Economic and social development, including trade integration, investment promotion, SME development, social cohesion, poverty reduction, increasing educational opportunities, etc.
- Security, peace-building and post-conflict stabilisation issues in SEE.

Projects:

Among the core projects planned is a *Roundtable on Inter-Ethnic Relations* aimed at promoting a continuous and comprehensive dialogue on issues affecting inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia through co-ordinated discussions on all relevant issues in various fields, including education, social and economic. These discussions are expected to produce policy recommendations for decision-makers and the public. The Roundtable will involve 20-24 participants (political personalities, academicians, civil society leaders and NGOs). Progressively, it is expected to develop into a roundtable covering a wider scope of regional inter-ethnic relations. This initiative is currently in the preparation stage. Other planned activities include a *Program on Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution Education and Training*, and a *Program on Regional Stability and Cooperation*. There will also be training workshops with international experts in conflict prevention and resolution, targeting two groups: (1) Foreign, Interior Affairs, and Defence ministry officials, and (2) graduate and postgraduate students from the Faculty of Law and other faculties. In particular, the following aspects will be covered: conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation (general aspects); comparative activities with Bosnia and Kosovo; and post-conflict challenges to the region, especially to FYR Macedonia.

MACEDONIAN CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION (MCIC)

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website: <http://www.mcms.org.mk>

Established in 1993 originally as a humanitarian organisation, MCIC is a non-governmental and non-profit association that seeks to promote sustainable development and basic aid in Macedonia through local and national initiatives. MCIC has defined three long-term goals: promotion of peace, organisation of a civic society, and help to the needy. With about 30 employees, MCIC is one of the largest local organisations. There is also a branch office in Kosovo. MCIC is funded by the World Council of Churches, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PHARE and others.

MCIC is managed by an Executive Board and an Assembly (advisory council). The Executive Board consists of 10 persons from different ethnic and religious backgrounds (in addition to representatives of the Macedonian, Albanian and Roma communities and youth and media representatives, there are representatives of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic religious community and the Evangelist-Methodist Church). The Assembly consists of 11 collective members (NGOs such as the Macedonian Helsinki Committee, "Mesečina", Movement of Ecologists of Macedonia, Women's Organisation of Macedonia, Union of the Albanian Women of Macedonia, etc) and 23 individual members from these same NGOs.

Activities are conducted through six programme sectors:

- Civil society and democratisation
- Rural development
- Water supply and sanitation
- Employment and income generation
- Health and education
- Social and humanitarian relief
- International programmes

Projects:

MCIC implemented about 80 projects in 1999 targeting marginalized groups such as villagers, women, ethnic minorities and handicapped persons. The *Civil Society Programme* of MCIC aims to further the organisation of civil society and the mobilisation and strengthening of existing organisations by supporting the expansion of their activities by scope and by geographic region. It consists of four types of activities: NGO Support Office, information, training, and Small Projects Fund (with grants of up to 5000 DM). A total of 30 NGOs were beneficiaries of direct support by MCIC in during 1998. MCIC pays particular attention to building links between NGOs by organising courses for NGOs at a regional level on topics such as institutional development and organisational strengthening. MCIC also publishes a *Directory of Non-Governmental Organisations in Macedonia*, as well an *NGO Bulletin*. One large ongoing media project of MCIC is a campaign on TV, radio and billboards entitled "*Whole is when there is everything*". Launched in 1999 at the peak of the refugee crisis, it seeks to promote appreciation of ethnic diversity in the country and to break down the walls between ethnic communities by raising awareness of human rights and inter-ethnic tensions. MCIC also organises seminars and workshops on human rights and inter-ethnic issues for high school students from bilingual schools.

MACEDONIAN PRESS CENTER

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e-mail: press@mt.net.mk

The Macedonian Press Center (MPC) was officially registered in April 1999 but practically exists from December 1997 when it was under the umbrella of USAID/CFED - Commercial Law Project. Initially, the MPC supported the Project in all activities related to public outreach. Realising the crucial role that the Press Center has in dissemination of all information to the media and public, other international organisations started to use the MPC's services. MPC has thus become a center for all Macedonian journalists, correspondents and reporters in the country as well as a place for the exchange information from the area of journalism and media professions. MPC is now a domestically-registered NGO specialized in projects and activities within the media and journalistic profession.

The main goals of MPC are:

- Promoting a free press
- Developing media infrastructure in FYR of Macedonia
- Improving professional skills of the local journalists through training, workshops, technical support, media assistance, etc.
- Logistical support to domestic journalists and foreign correspondents
- Serve as a link between the Macedonian media and foreign media organisations
- Communication and participation in the activities of international journalists associations
- Raising NGO awareness in FYR of Macedonia
- Promoting democratic values and establishing multiethnic links in society.

Projects:

In April 1999, during the refugee crisis, MPC provided logistic help to the international press as well as facilities and services for more than 120 journalists. MPC also developed an efficient radio and newspaper distribution system to cover total refugee population in the country. In addition, MPC participated as a partner in the visiting program "Third visit countries", in coordination with USIS - Skopje, consisting of 20 visiting programs for journalists and parliamentarians from various countries such as Russia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Greece, USA, Georgia, Romania, Kazakhstan, etc.

Activities in 2000 included:

1. *Legal Protection of journalists*. In the frame of this project, a Lawyers Network for Media Assistance was established with financial support from OSI-Macedonia.
2. *Balkan Neighbors Project and Conference "Balkan, Politics and Media"* (March 2000)
3. *South East Europe Network for Professionalisation of the Media (SEENPM)*, established in 1999 by 17 media centers and institutes from the South East Europe and funded by FRESTA (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The main areas of activity of SEENPM are: training courses for media professionals, training of trainers, training of spokespersons, study trips and exchange of media professionals, documentation, research and monitoring of media.
4. With the financial support of the American Foundation "National Endowment for Democracy", MPC has started publishing the magazine *Medium Monitor*, the only magazine in FYR of Macedonia for journalists, the journalistic profession and other media professionals. "Medium Monitor" is published quarterly.

“MULTIKULTURA”

Blok 82 A-B-1/15

MK- Tetovo

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"Multikultura" is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic NGO formed by young activists, most of them students from different ethnic backgrounds (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, etc.). The overall objective of Multikultura is to promote and affirm ideas about the development of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural community and to promote democracy and civil community through concrete programs.

Multikultura's aims are as follows: affirmation of ethnic cooperation and toleration in the FYR of Macedonia, development of scientific and educational cooperation with other organisations, advancement of democracy, civil community and peace, education of citizens about peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts and human rights.

ORGANISATION OF TURKISH YOUTH OF MACEDONIA "RUMELI"

Ul. Vukovarska br.7 2/20

MK-1000 Skopje

Tel: +389-2 630 840

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The aims of this organisation are to increase awareness of the importance of education; elimination of gender stereotypes and prejudice; development of historical and cultural ties between youth; environmental activities; promotion of the participation of Turkish youth in public life.

These objectives are realised by means of seminars and courses, tutoring in high school, computer and language training, exchange programmes, cooperation with similar organisations and other NGOs at the local and international levels, fund-raising for financing students to study abroad.

ORGANISATION FOR YOUTH INITIATIVES "PONTI"

Ul. Smoljani br. 6

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e-mail: ponti_mk@yahoo.com

Founded on 25 September 2000 in Skopje, PONTI is a non-governmental, non-partisan association of citizens of the Republic of Macedonia whose objectives are: harmonization of inter-ethnic relations, protection and affirmation of human and minority rights, promotion of cultural values, awareness-raising of young people in Macedonia concerning inter-ethnic relations and tolerance apart from their nationality, religious and ethnic origin. These objectives will be achieved through educational, informative and other kinds of campaigns on inter-ethnic relations and civil society; publication of reports, comments and other materials concerning all fields PONTI is working in; realisation of projects in these fields.

Projects

Planned areas of activity include: activities through which citizens will be informed about the concept of inter-ethnic relations, civil tolerance and communication; promotion of cultural values through debates, exhibitions and other cultural manifestations; direct and indirect

promotion of the fundamentally guaranteed human rights of citizens; affirmation of young talents through the publication of their work, organising exhibitions, etc.

ROMA COMMUNITY CENTER "DROM"

Lokalitet Serava, prizemje 7A

MK-1300 Kumanovo

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The Roma Community Center "DROM" (RCC DROM) was formed by young Roma intellectuals in September 1997 in Kumanovo with the aim to protect the rights and the interests of Roma and to implement these rights in all spheres of socio-economic life. DROM was established with the support of the Roma Participation Program of the Open Society Institute in Budapest. The objectives of RCC DROM are to introduce a constructive and peaceful dialogue between minorities in Macedonia; to present Roma issues on the national and international levels; lobby institutions and authorities for the resolution of Roma problems; emancipation of Roma in all aspects of life; collaborate with Roma and others in creating a future for the Roma people. It was particularly active during the Kosovo refugee crisis.

RCC "DROM" co-operates with many domestic and foreign Roma and non-Roma organisations and is a member of the Roma National Congress. "DROM" also participates in the Roma Information Exchange Network. "DROM" counts about 40 volunteers, of which 10 are active.

Projects:

RCC DROM has implemented projects in a variety of fields, including the legal sphere (citizenship issues), education and inter-ethnic tolerance, infrastructure, ecology, human rights, and health. One recent project among many was *Friendship 2000* designed for young Roma in refugee camps and collective centers which aims to entertain, relieve psychological strains and develop friendship through sports. This project receives financial support from the Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Freedom (MPDL) and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), with the assistance of UNHCR-Skopje, the Macedonian Red Cross, local media and others. Another project, which was supported by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), focussed on increasing participation of Romani voters in the September 2000 local elections.

ROMA INTERNATIONAL CENTER IN MACEDONIA (RICM)

BTR TV Station

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e-mail: btr@osi.net.mk

The Roma International Center in Macedonia is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation founded in October 1999 in Skopje. It is open to cooperation with all Roma NGOs active in Macedonia and abroad and as well as with non-Roma organisations. The aim of RICM is to promote and improve in many spheres Roma questions and problems in the country and also in Europe and the rest of the world.

RICM seeks to achieve its objectives through various activities through advocacy, programmes for the development of Roma culture, educational programmes, seminars and other events for Roma individuals and NGOs, cooperation with state bodies, information and

exchange programmes, representation of Macedonian Roma in front of governmental and non-governmental organisations, newspaper publishing, etc.

Projects:

Projects realised in 2000 include an international conference on *The Kosovo conflict and the consequences on Roma from Kosovo* (Skopje, June), as well as a summer camp for Roma refugee children from Kosovo as well as Roma children from Macedonia.

UNION FOR THE CULTURE OF THE VLACH IN MACEDONIA

Bul. Jane Sandanski 77/3-39

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The Union for the Culture of the Vlach in Macedonia was founded in April 1997. Its objectives are to support and develop the language, literature, education, religious life, folklore, and ethnological characteristics of the Vlach; to create a national scientific and cultural institute for the Vlachs; to support and promote multicultural and multiethnic life in the Republic of Macedonia; to organise seminars and other events on the topic of Vlach history, language, literature and folklore with the participation of Vlach and other experts; representation of the Vlachs at international organisations to call for the resolution of Vlach questions especially in Greece and Albania; cooperation with other Vlach associations and organisations in other countries. The Union has representation in Skopje, Veles, Lozovo, Shtip and Vinica. The Union is a member of the international "Union for the Language and Culture of the Vlachs" based in Freiburg, Germany, as well as of the Coalition of NGOs based in Skopje.

Projects:

The Union has sought to achieve these aims by publishing 30 books (original works in Vlach as well as translations into Vlach), some of which are bilingual, as well as audio cassettes and a periodical which is financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia. The Union also organises events around the national Vlach day (23 May). The Union has also issued a Memorandum for the Resolution of the Vlach Question which was addressed to the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe.

UNION OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Vasil Gjorgov b.b., baraka 4

PO Box 571,

MK-1000 Skopje

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e-mail: sozm@mt.net.mk

The Union of Women's Organisations of Macedonia (UWOM) is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-political association established in October 1994. It is a network of 54 independent women's organisations regardless of ethnicity, race and nationality, including Macedonian, Roma, Serbian, Vlach and Albanian women. UWOM's vision statement is gender equality, guarantee of women's rights as human rights, and the elimination of discrimination of women in society and in the family. It seeks to achieve its aims by:

- Supporting local women's organisations and groups as well as individual women.
- Developing women's participation in public life, cooperation with institutions and organisations, projects related to alleviate women's problems.

- Creating new relations in society and in the family in order to overcome the traditional subordinate role of women; cooperation and mutual support.
- Advocating and promoting women's rights; combating violence against women, abuse and trafficking of women, sexism and discrimination; equal rights and participation in all spheres of society and personal life as well as equal access to resources.
- Encouraging tolerance and dialogue; peace in the region; economic independence of women; improvement of the social and economic status of women.

Projects:

Projects are realised in the fields of include education and training, psycho-social support of women's groups and individuals, humanitarian activities, publishing, as well as research. Projects realised in 1999 included *Open Door I*, which provided support to Albanian women refugees from Kosovo (funded by "Kvina till Kvinna"), *Open Door II* for Roma, Serbian and other women refugees from Kosovo and Yugoslavia (funded by the King Baudoin Foundation), *Women Victims of Violence* (funded by Soros and PHARE), *Education of Roma Girls* (World Bank), and *Implementing Good Community Relations* which sought to overcome the religious, cultural, and linguistic barriers between ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian communities (Kvinna till Kvinna). In 2000, one follow-up project included *Open Door - Center for Women Meetings from Different Ethnic Backgrounds* whose objective is to integrate women and young girls from ethnically-mixed environments as well as women refugees through different activities aiming at relaxation and development of inter-ethnic tolerance. Another aim of this project is to identify problems and solutions.

ANNEX F

WEBSITES OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES AND NETWORKS

CEDIME-SE

www.greekhelsinki.gr/english/organisations/cedime.html

COMIR

www.osi.hu/lgi/comir

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

www.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE TREATIES

<http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/EN/cadreprincipal.htm>

COUNCIL OF EUROPE - MINORITIES HOME PAGE

www.humanrights.coe.int/Minorities/Eng/SiteMap.htm

EUROPEAN CENTER FOR MINORITY ISSUES (ECMI)

www.ecmi.de

ECMI Enriched Links Database

www.ecmi.de/information.htm

EUROLANG Minority News Agency

www.eurolang.net

FRESTA (Copenhagen)

www.see.fresta.org/

FRESTA Balkan Human Rights Network www.balkan-rights.dk

Danish Center for Human Rights www.humanrights.dk

FRESTA Southeast European Refugee Assistance Network (SEE-RAN)

(website under construction)

Danish Refugee Council www.drc.dk

FRESTA South East European Youth Network

(website under construction)

Danish Association for International Cooperation (Copenhagen) www.ms.dk

FRESTA South East European Network for Professionalisation of the Media

www.seenpm.org

Danish School of Journalism (Aarhus) www.djh.dk

MINELRES Project on Minority Human Rights in Central and Eastern Europe

www.riga.lv/minelres/

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE - HUNGARY

www.osi.hu

MANAGING MULTIETHNIC LOCAL COMMUNITIES BEST PRACTICE
DATABASE

<http://lgi.osi.hu/ethnic/csdb/>

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)
www.osce.org

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OSCE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON
NATIONAL MINORITIES
<http://www.osce.org/hcnm/recommendations/index.htm>

STABILITY PACT FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE
<http://www.stabilitypact.org/>