

## Macedonia: Role of commissions for minority relations and rights of ethnic communities

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The aim of the Commission is efficient resolving of issues, problems and needs concerning representatives of a certain ethnic community, as well as enhancing the relations between different ethnic communities living in the municipality.

The Citizens' Association for Support of Interethnic Dialogue and Community Development Common Values organized public debate on the following topic "Role of commissions for minority relations and rights of ethnic communities in municipalities Veles, Chashka, Lozovo and Gradsko" in Veles on April 4, 2007.

The aim of the debate was to incite comments, questions and suggestions about relations between ethnic communities and to provide information, conclusions and recommendations for eliminating obstacles for realization of minority rights in Veles, Chashka, Gradsko and Lozovo.

The debate was attended by representatives of the municipal councils and administration as well as representatives of citizens' association from Veles, Chashka, Lozovo and Gradsko. The municipalities have the following population structure:

- Municipality of Veles: total population 55.108, Macedonians 84,86 %, Albanians 4,17%, Turks 3,13%, Roma 1,45%, Vlachs 0,62%, Serbs 0,98%, Bosnians 4,37% and others 0,42%,
  - Municipality of Chashka: total population 7.673, Macedonians 57,28%, Albanians 35,23%, Turks 5,10%, Roma 1,45%, Vlachs 0,01%, Serbs 0,72%, Bosnians 0,87% and others 0,79%,
  - Municipality of Gradsko: total population 3.760, Macedonians 77,77%, Albanians 3,32%, Turks 1,89%, Roma 3,38%, Serbs 0,61%, Bosnians 12,37% and others 0,66% and
  - Municipality of Lozovo: total population 2.858, Macedonians 86,46%, Albanians 3,32%, Turks 1,22%, Vlachs 4,27%, Serbs 0,94%, Bosnians 1,19% and others 0,42%. Keynote speakers at the debate were:
    - Mr. Jusuf Ahmedov - President of Commission for minority relations, municipality of Chashka
    - Mr. Fehim Jusovikj - Representative of Veles Municipal Council
    - Mr. Ramiz Hodzickj - Representative of Gradsko Municipal Council
    - Mr. Goran Andov - Representative of Citizens' Association Galebi, Chashka
    - Mr. Dime Velez - Representative of NGOSC (Focus Foundation)
- Following conclusions and recommendations emerged from the keynote speakers' discussion followed by the debate of all the participants:
- Municipalities Veles, Gradsko and Lozovo have no Commissions for minority relations.
  - Municipal administration should be in function of the Commission for minority relations and to be more efficient in realization.
  - Implementing cooperation at all levels, especially with NGO sector.
  - Council members in municipal councils in Veles, Gradsko and Lozovo, although not obliged by the law, are encouraged to establish Commissions for minority relations in their municipalities and to provide conditions for efficient work.
  - Appeal to municipal administration to dedicate themselves to the needs of Commissions for minority relations and to help them administering their activities especially realization of the decisions reached by municipal councils.
  - Appeal to citizens' associations for active cooperation with Commissions for minority relations and other public administration in municipalities Veles, Gradsko, Chashka and Lozovo, thus contributing in more efficient way to meeting the needs of ethnic communities and their more efficient solving.