
Macedonia: Debates highlight language education and local participation

Five debates examined the equitable representation of ethnic communities living in Macedonia. Recommendations stressed the importance of quality teaching in minorities' mother tongues and increasing the number of people employed in local institutions and public enterprises. The positive role of NGOs and the need to enhance collaboration between NGOs and local government were also highlighted.

High quality dialogue was the order of the day in each of five debates, organized by the Citizens' Association for Common Values between September 2006 and January 2007 as part of the MRP and DIANET programmes. Representatives of local government, local communities, NGOs and citizens from nine multiethnic municipalities (Krusevo, Prilep, Plasnica, Dolneni, Valandovo, Gazi Baba, Cair, Butel and Delcevo) took part in the debates. Media presence contributed to further raising awareness of minority rights in Macedonia.

The importance of improving communal living conditions was stressed, with minority needs being identified as education, employment, the expression of cultural identity, use of minority languages and minority inclusion in developing local policies. However, the main recommendations highlighted the importance of ensuring quality teaching in minority group languages and increasing the numbers of people from minority groups employed in local institutions and public enterprises.

There was general agreement on the important role of NGOs in this field and the need for enhanced collaboration between them and local government. It was also acknowledged that capacity building through training, such as those organized by Common Values has resulted in the upgrading of human resources for associations working in minority rights.

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