

First Multiethnic happening „Under the Same Sun” at Skopje

The first one-day multiethnic happening took place on 1st November, 2008 at the Skopje Fair under the motto „Under the same sun”, as part of the campaign for promoting the multiethnic values and encouraging the mutual respect between ethnic communities in Macedonia.

Altogether 800 participants from 28 cities in Macedonia presented folk costumes, handicrafts, cuisine specialties and national folk dances. The culture, tradition and values characteristic for different ethnic communities were promoted by 61 NGOs and 8 institutions, mostly by folklore groups, women’s organizations and museums. More than 6000 visitors from all over Macedonia had the opportunity to get together and taste traditional meals, enjoy the music and get familiar with the specificities of the culture and tradition of different ethnicities in the country. 10 short documentary films were presented, as well as 11 ethnological exhibitions, 4 art exhibitions, and 15 exhibitions of fine arts. A comic book workshop of young artists and a painting workshop of primary school pupils were also part of the happening. 25 dances of folklore groups were performed on the scene. 13 different folk costumes of ethnic communities, 22 stands with traditional meals and 8 stands with publications were presented also. The event provoked great interest from media - total of 10 TV stations (4 national and 6 local) and 8 radio stations (1 national and 7 local) decided to support the event and to broadcast the spot announcement for the multiethnic happening on their programs for free two weeks before the event.

At the official opening, speeches were given by H.E. Erwan Fouere, European Union Special Representative and Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Macedonia; Vladimir Milchin, Executive Director of FOSIM and Hajrije Ahmed, president of NGO *Common Values*. „All of the ethnic communities and traditions indicate that this is a truly rich nation and this is what Macedonia can offer to the EU” said the Euro-Ambassador during the opening of the event. Philip Riker, the U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia, also attended the event along with the numerous guests and had the opportunity to see a great number of exhibits and folk costumes and enjoyed the cuisine specialties and the folk dances of the ethnic communities.

NGOSCs and NGO Common Values organized transportation for interested citizens outside of Skopje in order to give them opportunity to visit and participate at this event. The evening ended with a free concert of the multiethnic bands *Bla Bla Bla*, *Area*, *Toni Kitanovski* and *Cherkezi*, which was an opportunity for youth to get together.

The multiethnic happening was covered by national and local TV and radio stations with short overviews in the evening news and wider presentation on the Vlach program on MTV on 3 November, 2008, Serbian program on 2 November 2008, TV *Alfa* on 3 November etc). In addition, the national TV Alfa agreed to record the concert and to broadcast it on its program.