

## Public debate at Gevgelija

A public debate on the topic *Equal (educational) opportunities for minorities* was held in Gevgelija on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008, organized by Foundation Open Society Institute - Macedonia in cooperation with NGO Support Center Gevgelija. 31 participants attended the debate. Introductory speakers were: Marija Nikolova - representative of the Department for development and improvement of the education in the languages of ethnic minorities within Ministry of Education and Science on the subject *Language and culture of the Vlach community in the educational system, challenges and solution*; Axher Imetovska - representative of the Department for development and improvement of the education in the languages of ethnic minorities within Ministry of Education and Science on the subject *Language and culture of Turkish community in the educational system, challenges and solution*; Stojan Taskov - representative of the Vlach association from Gevgelija on the subject *History and education of Vlachs*; Suzana Musliu - representative of NGO Derja – Skopje on the topic *Education of the Turkish community*; Lazo Trajkov – representative of the Regional Center for Sustainable Development in Gevgelija on the subject *Results of monitoring in the field of education of non-majority ethnic communities in the Municipalities of Valandovo and Dojran*. Moderator of the public debate was Toni Avramov, journalist. Recommendations from the debate were as follows: awareness of minorities has to be increased in the field of education; capacities of minorities for lobbying in local and national institutions have to be strengthened; sensibility of the media for minorities problems has to be increased; living conditions of the Turkish population, which is settled in high mountains, has to be improved; more financial resources in the area of education have to be provided for school buildings, books, literature etc.

Debate ended with the following conclusions: initiation of education in Serbian language and securing books in Serbian language; preparation and publishing of literature on the language of the ethnic communities; continuous training of teaching staff for education in Vlach and Turkish language; realization of educational plans and programs in Vlach and Turkish language; education of Turkish woman; adoption of the Vlach language as facultative in all primary schools; lessons in Macedonian language for the Turkish population.