

Public debate at Resen

The Foundation Open Society Institute - Macedonia in cooperation with NGO Support Center Resen organized the fourth public debate on 21st March, 2008 in Resen on the topic Protection of the rights of non-majority ethnic communities in Resen and Bitola. The aim of the public debate was to stimulate discussion between members of the central and local government, NGOs and citizens in order to emphasize protection of minorities' rights in the region and needs of the local ethnic communities in Resen and Bitola. Total of 45 representatives of NGOs, institutions, media and local government from the region participated in the debate, moderated by Roza Janevska. Introductory speakers were:

-Sashko Vasilevski, Deputy Minister of Justice, spoke about the situation of non-majority ethnic communities in the country and legal regulations that guarantee the protection of the rights of ethnic communities;

-Liljana Ilievska, Deputy Ombudsman – regional office in Bitola, explained the way citizens can submit prepositions to Ombudsman and underlined the need for bringing the Law for antidiscrimination;

-Erdzan Kasum, representative of NGO „Sonce” - Bitola, underlined that the discrimination of Roma in Bitola is seen on each step, especially regarding education, employment, infrastructure. He underlined examples of Roma discrimination – in asking documents from public administration; even in some pubs in Bitola entries for Roma are not allowed;

-Omer Sulejman, representative of NGO „Via Vita” - Bitola, spoke about mechanisms for protection of minority rights and sent the following message to the participants: family and school are the most important factors that have to be supported in order to create society without ethnic prejudices;

-Dzermal Mehmed, President of NGO “Nijazi Bej” - Resen, informed participants about the conditions of Turks in Resen, underlying that the employment of Turks in public administration is under 1 %.

During the debate main topics of discussions were: inadequate representation of non-majority ethnic communities in institutions and problems in education, existing discrimination of ethnic communities, employment and procedures for submitting prepositions to Ombudsman. The need for continuous communication between all institutions, organizations and subjects that work on protection of human rights and rights of non-majority ethnic communities was underlined.

Article about the debate was published in local news-paper in Bitola “Bitolski vesnik” on 26th March, 2008.