

## **Public debate at Strumica**

On 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2008 in Strumica, a public debate on the topic *Integration of ethnic minorities in the public life* was organized. It aimed at assessing the current situation regarding participation of the ethnic communities in public life and their participation in decision making processes. Introductions were given by the following speakers: Branko Andonov, Councillor in the Municipality of Vasilevo, Jasmina Porkojevic, representative from Association of Serbs in Macedonia, Lazar Mladenov, President of the Bulgarian culture club in Macedonia, Iris Kumbaraci, representative from Turkish ethnic minority and Mr. Zekimiren Useinov, President of Citizens Association *Kudret - Radovis*. Total of 30 participants (21 representatives of NGOs, 6 of the local governments Strumica and Vasilevo, 2 of public institutions and 1 media) attended the debate. Following conclusions and recommendations were given: relevant institutions have to pay more attention to education of different ethnic communities; municipalities have to employ a responsible person for ethnic issues in the municipality administration; children from different ethnic communities are to have classes on Macedonian language from their first grade; network of NGOs working with ethnic communities has to be established; a recommendation has to be sent to media for broadcasting more domestic programs beside programs from other states so that equal representation of all ethnic communities is provided; Macedonians have to be stimulated to learn Roma and Turkish language in order to help in providing education on mother tongue for these communities; such kind of events have to be organized more often.

Public debate lasted for 2,5 hours and was recorded by TV *Kanal Vis* from Strumica and broadcasted twice on its program on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2008, together with interviews with Suncica Kostovska Petrovska, project manager. The interview was broadcasted on radio *Kanal 77*, too.