

Public debate at Debar

Second public debate on the topic *Status of Non-majority communities' rights protection in Debar and Centar Zupa* was organized in Debar, on December 4th 2007. Introductory speakers were the president of the Council of municipality Debar, representatives from NGOs, and the Regional Ombudsman office. Moderator was Mr. Goce Ljubinoski. Translation from Macedonian in Albanian and vice versa was provided. There were 46 participants of NGOs, local government, public institutions and media from municipality of Debar, Centar Zupa and Mavrovo and Rostuse.

Introductory speakers were:

-Mr. Nizamedin Papraniku – Chairman of Municipality Council of Debar. His presentation was directed towards explanation of the role of the Municipality Council in this matter;

-Mr. Kamer Imeri – State advisor of Ombudsman, who explained the role of the Ombudsman office in protection of non-majority communities' rights;

-Ms. Ivanka Ivanovska – representative of Women organization Debar, spoke about the needs of non-majority ethnic communities in Debar, and the specifics of the Macedonian community as minority on local level;

-Mr. Ilir Iseni – president of NGO *Tolerantna Mladina (Tolerant Youth)*, addressed the need of improving interethnic relations between youth;

-Mr. Fehmi Skenderi – NGO *Zhupa Turklery*, from Centar Zhupa, explained possibilities for NGOs to monitor local institutions in the area of respecting non-majority rights.

After the introductory speeches ended, a discussion about issues concerning non-majority ethnic communities in Debar and Centar Zhupa was opened. The number of representatives from different ethnic communities and institutions, who attended the debate, was bigger than expected. Their interest demonstrated their willingness to discuss about such issues. This debate was evaluated as very useful by the participants, pointing out this sensitive issues have not been opened in the last 7-8 years.