

Regional meeting at Strumica

On 26th June 2008, a regional meeting of Ombudsman with 32 representatives of Municipal Councils, Commissions for Inter-Community Relations and NGOs from the region was held in Strumica, organized by NGOSC Strumica and NGOSC Gevgelija. Main goal of this meeting was to initiate cooperation between Ombudsman, Municipal Councils and NGOs from Strumica, Vasilevo, Bosilovo, Novo Selo, Radovis, Konce, Berovo, Pehcevo, Valandovo, Dojran, Bogdanci and Gevgelija. All of these municipalities are not obliged by the law to establish a Commission for Inter-Community Relations, among them only Municipality of Konce¹ established a Commission for Inter-Community Relations. Facilitator of the regional meeting was Mr. Sreten Koceski from *Institute for Community Development* - Tetovo. On this meeting, representative of regional Ombudsman office in Strumica Slavjanka Mihajlovik, representative of Commissions for Inter-Community Relations in Konce, Slavco Petrov and representative of OSCE, Zage Filipovski presented their views on the topic. The representative of Commission for Inter-Community Relations in Konce explained how the Commission in Konce was established, elaborated its role and main activities. Representative of OSCE presented positive examples of the work of the Commissions, the kind of problems that the Commissions solve and why the Commission is so important for the municipality. Representative of regional Ombudsman office in Strumica introduced the work of regional Ombudsman, its jurisdiction, how regional Ombudsman acts and solves problems. The procedure of writing requests to regional Ombudsman was explained, as well.

The regional meeting passed in a constructive atmosphere with a discussion about the ways of establishing mechanisms for cooperation and dialogue for issues that concern minorities, such as Commission for Inter-Community Relations.

Following conclusions arose from this meeting: citizens should be informed about the role and competences of Commission for Inter-Community Relations, regular meetings between regional Ombudsman and the citizens should be organized, lobbying activities for establishing Commission for Inter-Community Relations should be organized, as well as more such meetings and public events between Ombudsman and Municipal Councils, Commissions for Inter-Community Relations and NGOs for further exchange of views and joint activities.

¹ Konce (85.10% Macedonians, 14.73% Albanians)