

Thematic meeting at Cashka

First thematic meeting on the topic *Strengthening the role of the Commission for Inter-Community Relations and the Commissions for equal opportunities* was held in Cashka on 22 February, 2008. A total of 26 representatives of different ethnic communities (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian and Bosnian), primary from schools in Cashka, Municipality Council and local administration, members of the Commission for Inter-Community Relations in Cashka Municipality and Commission for equal possibilities between women and men in Veles Municipality and NGOs from Veles participated in the meeting. Biljana Manaskova from Municipality of Veles facilitated the meeting. The topic of the meeting was identified as a need by representatives of civil society, neighbourhood units and local government in Cashka, in order to improve the work of the Commission for Inter-Community Relations¹. Jusuf Ahmed, president of the Commission presented the work of the Commission for Inter-Community Relations and its draft-program for 2008, as well as the structure of the Commission, consisted by representatives from all minorities living in the Cashka Municipalities (Macedonian, Albanian, Turk, Serbian and Bosnian).

After the presentation, possible future activities of the Commission were discussed, and three working groups were established in order to define priority problems and needs of ethnic minorities in Cashka Municipality. Following needs and priorities were identified: mutual understanding and respect, education (especially girls' education), insufficient engagement of Muslim women in public life, equal representation of all minorities groups, joint celebration of traditional holidays, solving infrastructural problems, establishing local media, development of rural tourism, transparency of the Municipality and fight with unemployment. For the proposed needs and priorities, possible activities were recommended and modification of the Commission working program was proposed.

The plan of activities of the Commission for Inter-community Relations of municipality of Cashka was created and sent in written to the Commission, which accepted and included them in the program for 2008. On the Municipality Council's session on 27 May 2008 the program of the Commission for Inter-Community Relations for 2008 was accepted and 200.000 denars from the Municipality budget were allocated for its realization.

¹ Cashka Municipality established Commission for Inter-Community Relations, according to the Law on Local Self-Government, because of the number of minority representatives in Cashka (57.28% Macedonians, 35.23% Albanians, 5.10% Turks)