

Center for Research and Policy Making



Occasional Paper N. 13

**OSCE RECIPE FOR BUILDING A PLURALIST AND
GENUINELY DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY IN MACEDONIA**

September, 2007
Skopje, Macedonia

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“The participating States will endeavour to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities, notwithstanding the need to learn the official language or languages of the State concerned, have adequate opportunities for instruction of their mother tongue or in their mother tongueⁱ...”

Back in October 1995, when Macedonia was admitted as a participating country to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), it accepted the political commitment to treat national minorities in accordance with the principles written down in the Copenhagen Document.

This has significant importance because the country observed in this article features multiethnic society and has suffered an inter-ethnic conflict during 2001. In addition, the questions of ethnicity, proportional representation of minorities, human rights, educational language policies etc. were principal issues during its short history since independence in 1991. Furthermore, the complexity of the Macedonian society can be seen through the lenses of the many existing ethnic groups from which—and according to the latest Census of population, households and dwellings—64.18 % are ethnic Macedonians, 25.17 % are ethnic Albanians, 3.85 % ethnic Turks, 2.66 % are Roma, 1.78 % ethnic Serbs, 0.84 % are Bosnians, 0.48 % are Vlachs and 1.04 % are others. (*State Statistical Office 2002*). Despite the ethnic diversity, it was the second largest ethnic group, the Albanian one, which succeeded to voice its demands for greater rights for the minorities.

The liberal views on minority rights which were negotiated in the Framework Agreementⁱⁱ that ended the inter-ethnic conflict initiated the path towards transformation of the Macedonian Constitution which consequently led to the formation of ‘*consociational political system*’. This kind of democratic design is based on the empirical observations of the Dutch professor Arendt Lijphartⁱⁱⁱ and it is defined as provision for minority veto over majority-launch legislation. In addition, the so-called ‘*Badinter majority system*’ was also implemented.^{iv} This means for instance laws and bylaws that directly affect culture, use of language, education, personal documentation,

and use of symbols, require double majority in the decision-making process in the National Assembly “majority vote of the Representatives attending, within which there must be a majority of the votes of the Representatives attending who claim to belong to the communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia”. (*Article 69, Ohrid Framework Agreement, 2001 n.d.*)

There is no doubt that the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement had positive contribution regarding the status of *all* the minorities living in Macedonia. However, in reality the main privileges were exclusively established for the largest minority. This is true due to the fact that the most important rights (e.g. the second official language, official personal documents in minority language, usage of the minority language in the units of local self-government etc.) are associated with the minorities that represent more than 20 percent of the total population. This applies only to the Albanian community because all the other minorities put together represent approximately 12 percent of the population. In addition, the principle of equitable representation of persons belonging to all communities in public bodies at all levels and other areas of public life (*Article 8, Ohrid Framework Agreement, 2001 n.d.*) illustrates that the solution presented in the Framework Agreement puts the Albanian community in much more favorable position compared to all other communities. In the post-conflict period, the number of ethnic Albanians employed in the police force increased from 2 percent in 2001 to 16 percent in 2006; in the Defense Ministry from 2 percent to 14 percent; and in the Ministry of Economy from 5 percent to 24 percent (*Freedom House 2007*) whereas the overall Roma representation in public bodies at all levels grew from 0,51 percent in 2001 to 0,55 percent in 2006. (*The European Centre for Minority Issues 2006*)

Some experts point out that “building a bi-national state while at the same time implementing consociational type of democracy may lead the state towards separation”. (*Prof. Dr. Siljanovska-Davkova 2005*). This can be considered as a reasonable argument and should be taken into consideration (according to the senior OSCE official, the present High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Rolf Ekéus). In his address named, “The Role of Education in Building a Pluralist and Genuinely Democratic Society”^v at the South-East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo^{vi} he made abundantly clear that:

“While a pluralist and genuinely democratic society should enable protection of minority rights, **separation** along ethnic lines should be avoided at all costs since it reinforces ethnic divisions within communities and serves as a fertile breeding ground for negative stereotypes and prejudices among different ethnic groups”.

Speaking on the topic of his lecture the ambassador Ekéus expressed his concerns about the ‘**politicization of schools**’ and ‘**undemocratic school governance**’ which is deeply rooted and coupled with the politicization process. Although, the University was not mentioned specifically, pointing out exactly this issues at a SEEU can hardly be seen as a coincidence . During the month of July, an independent three-member commission was established to investigate the assistant Mr. Ruhi Bakiu’s accusation of nepotism at the Faculty of Law. The final report prepared by the commission and the faculty Dean states that ‘there is *no* nepotism at the Faculty of Law’. However, there is a big disagreement and unsatisfaction by the faculty regarding this issue.

Some members of the University management have been continuously accused for being connected with couple of cases of employment of family members. An article named “Nepotism at the Van der Stoel University” (*Dnevnik, July 20, 2007*) indicates possible nepotism cases where high ranking officials like the Rector of the SEE Univesity, the Pro-Rector for financial issues, the Secretary General and others are involved.

Obviously attempting to support good governance and good planning, the senior OSCE official called for attention, and at the same time gave advice for “de-politicization of education” in addition to “depoliticizing the appointment of school directors” and went into articulating that “such undemocratic tendencies must be avoided if effective participation of major stakeholders in any decision making concerning school life is to be accomplished”.

As a final point in his speech, the ambassador Ekéus raised the question of appropriate approaches to language learning as a necessity in a society that have experienced interethnic tensions. In his perception, the language can be powerful tool for integration if the right kinds of policies are implemented.

“However for this to function properly, both the majority and minority must be willing to accept compromise. Integration, therefore, involves responsibilities and rights on both sides. The minority should be prepared to learn and to use the language or languages endorsed by the State, normally the language of the majority. At the same time, the majority must accept the linguist rights of persons belonging to national minorities”.

He went on saying that “lack of proficiency in the State language can further increase ethnic tensions and segregation of communities along ethnic lines”. Consequently, the chances of a successful integration process of the persons belonging to national minorities would be seriously undermined. (*Stoel 2007*)

According to the author, this was perceived as a clear interpretation of article 34 of the Copenhagen Document mentioned in the beginning of the text. In addition, this also can be considered as constructive change in the OSCE perceptions and views towards this issue within the Macedonian context. After 15 years of recommendations how to implement minority-language teaching in the Macedonian educational system, the concerns have been voiced on the fact that increasing number of young Albanians do not learn the Macedonian language sufficiently to be properly prepared for participation in a society where they still constitute a minority. However, the main question which arises is *how the Macedonian multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society—having in mind the OSCE references—can achieve positive outcome from this situation?*

Endnotes:

ⁱ Article 34, paragraph 1 of the CSCE Copenhagen Document. To see the text of the Copenhagen Document, please visit http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2006/06/19392_en.pdf

ⁱⁱ See the text at http://www.usip.org/library/pa/macedonia/pa_mac_08132001.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Lijphart developed the idea of consociational democracy in his books "*Democracy in Plural Societies*" and "*Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries*".

^{iv} Robert Badinter is a member of the French Senate and former president of France's Constitutional Court. A prominent figure in European political life, and has been President of the OSCE Court of Conciliation and Arbitration since 1995.

^v Address by Ambassador Rolf Ekéus, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, at the South East European University, Tetovo, Macedonia, May 08, 2007. At <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/documents.html>

^{vi} In the spring of 2000, the High Commissioner for National Minorities of the OSCE, Mr. Max van der Stoep initiated discussion on the foundation by international donors of a new private University in Macedonia. Following the adoption of the Law on higher education by the Parliament, which allowed both the establishment of Universities by non-State founders, and mainstream teaching in the Albanian language, one year later, the South East European University opened. For more information about the University, see <http://www.seeu.edu.mk/english/index.asp>

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