



Strasbourg, 7 December 2011

Public
GVT/COM/III(2011)007

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR
THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

**COMMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF “THE FORMER YUGOSLAV
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA” ON THE THIRD OPINION OF THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL
MINORITIES BY “THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF
MACEDONIA”**

(received on 1 December 2011)



**Republic of Macedonia
Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**Comments by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia on the Third Opinion
of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention
for the Protection of National Minorities by the Republic of Macedonia**

Introduction

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia highly values the work of the Advisory Committee in ensuring the full implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and in monitoring the performance of its States parties in regard to the implementation of its provisions. The authorities of the Republic of Macedonia had excellent cooperation and frank exchange with the Advisory Committee during their visit to the Republic of Macedonia carried out from 29 November to 2 December 2010.

Since the adoption of the Advisory Committee Second Opinion in February 2007, a lot of actions have been taken for upgrading the protection of persons belonging to the ethnic communities in all spheres of life in the Macedonian society. We note with satisfaction that those achievements are reflected in the Third Opinion of the Advisory Committee. It is important to mention that progress has been achieved in the area of education, use of languages, media, legislative and institutional protection against discrimination and increasing participation of persons belonging to non-majority communities in public life at central and local level.

The comments of the Republic of Macedonia on a number of findings and recommendations contained in the Opinion of the Advisory Committee have been prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the relevant ministries and other state institutions involved in the implementation of the Framework Convention.

II Replies to article-by-article findings of the Advisory Committee

Article 3 of the Framework Convention

Personal scope of application of the Framework Convention

The text of the revised Declaration submitted in 2004 was drafted in line with the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. Consequently, the Convention is applied to the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia who live within its borders and who are part of the Albanian people, Turkish people, Vlach people, Serbian people, Roma people and Bosniak people.

As regards the status of other ethnic groups, including the Egyptians, their requests for protection under the FCNM are considered on an article-by-article basis.

As regards non-citizens, while acknowledging the arguments presented by the Advisory Committee, the Republic of Macedonia would like to underline that non-citizens enjoy human rights as provided by national law and international treaties.

Data collection

On 15 October, the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a Law to terminate the census which started on 1 October 2011. The reason for adopting the Law was uneven and inconsistent application of the census methodology, as devised by the State Statistical Office, by census collectors.

The 2011 Census Law stipulates that the census should also include persons (and members of their families) who are residents of the Republic of Macedonia and who at the time of the census, but not more than 12 months before the census, are staying abroad, as well as that their data is to be collected by presentation of original documents (identity card, passport or birth certificate for minors) and not photocopies of these documents.

The State Census Commission and the State Statistical Office, as authorities in charge, were of the opinion that there were insurmountable differences over the interpretation of the legal provisions and concluded that the Census could not result in relevant data and that the Commission could not fulfill its legal obligations. The Government accepted their expert opinion and in order to ensure that the relevant legislation and Eurostat regulations in this area are observed, supported the decision and the Law for the termination of the Census.

The methodology adopted for the needs of the 2011 population, household and housing census of the Republic of Macedonia was fully aligned with the international recommendations of the United Nations and Eurostat.

Article 4 of the Framework Convention

Legal and institutional Framework for combating discrimination

In December 2010, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia appointed the 7 members of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination. The Commission is established as autonomous and independent body under the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. The members of the Commission have a five-year mandate, and a right to be re-elected. The financial resources for the functioning of the Commission are provided under the Budget of the Republic Macedonia, but the Commission can provide means from other sources as well. With the Government decision for the needs of the Commission, working space was provided and one civil servant from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has been transferred to the Commission for providing administrative-technical service. The need of taking-over of additional staff among civil servants (preferable 1 per Commissioner) is going to be reviewed in the forthcoming period. The Commission holds regular meetings once a week.

Until now, 55 complaints on various grounds have been submitted to the Commission, which have been processed and further action has been taken. Out of them, 9 complaints related to alleged discrimination on ethnic grounds. In two cases, the Commission found that complaints were grounded, in 1 that the complaint was groundless and 1 complaint was not considered because it was obviously unfounded. For 3 complaints the procedure is underway.

The activities for promotion of the work and strengthening of the capacities of the Commission for protection against discrimination are continuous. In order to improve the cooperation and partnership, as well as to raise awareness of the existence and work of the Commission, a number of awareness raising events and meetings, including with the Office of the Ombudsman, were organized.

Full and effective equality. The situation of Roma

Continued efforts have been taken in order to improve the implementation of the Roma Strategy and the Action plans in the framework of the 2005-2015 Decade of Roma inclusion. The inter-ministerial coordination working group on the implementation of the Roma strategy was re-activated.

The Republic of Macedonia holds the annual rotating Presidency of the Roma Decade (July 2011-June 2012). A number of events in all areas of concern for the Decade have been planned under the Macedonian Presidency.

At the end of 2010, the government adopted the 2nd National Action Plan for Improving the Social Status of Roma Women in the Republic of Macedonia for the period 2011–2013.

Three workshops have been held under this action plan in Kočani, Štip and Kumanovo. The target group of these workshops was unemployed Roma women, who had an opportunity to learn about employment opportunities, healthcare and social insurance protection rights, exercising human rights, and prevention of and protection from discrimination.

Roma information center contact persons have been appointed at the local offices of the Public Health Institute in 10 municipalities, with regard to promoting healthy lifestyle habits, gaining and exercising healthcare rights. In this context, a brochure on healthy lifestyles and habits has been prepared in the Macedonian and Roma languages.

On 18 February.2011, the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia informed the 10 local employment centers in the municipalities with high rates of unemployed Roma (Šuto Orizari, Kumanovo, Prilep, Bitola, Štip, Delčevo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kočani and Kičevo) about the planned activities aimed at greater inclusion of Roma women in the ongoing employment programs. Guidelines have been issued for implementation of the planned activities and it has been requested that implementing officers be nominated.

The Ministry of Education and Science has launched an initiative in Kavadarci for verification of adult education and completion of education of the Roma, especially Roma women. Furthermore, under the Adult Education Action Plan, the Adult Education Center has envisaged activities for dropouts, paying special attention to Roma women.

There are a total of 321,341 unemployed persons on national level. The Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia has registered 15,377 unemployed Roma persons, of whom 6,508 are women.

Overview of registered unemployed Roma persons by level of education

Level of Education	Non-Qualified	Semi-Qualified and Incomplete Secondary Education	Qualified	Highly-Qualified	Secondary Vocational Education	Higher Education	University Education	Masters	Doctors	Total
Total	13640	320	745	1	619	4	46	2	-	15377
Women	6020	58	152	-	258	1	19	-	-	6508

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, with the Employment Agency, implements the active measures/programs regarding the employment from the Operational Plan for Active Measures and Programs on Employment. These are implemented in accordance with the defined timeframe and cover both employers and unemployed Roma persons. A total of 51 Roma were included in the Self-employment programme of the operational plan for active employment measures for 2011 and 34 Roma were included in the program for support for employment of Roma people.

The Operational Plan for Active Programs and Measures on Employment includes the following programs and measures on employment:

1. Self-employment program
2. Support program for formalization of existing businesses
3. Support for additional employment in firms registered through the Self-Employment Program in 2007, 2008 and 2009 and program for formalization of existing businesses in 2008 and 2009
4. Pilot Program – Workforce Mobility
5. Preparation Program for Employment through Training
 - 5.1. Training, re-qualification or training completion of unemployed persons for a known employer
 - 5.2. Training in employment clubs for acquisition of knowledge and skills (foreign languages and computers)
 - 5.3. Pilot-training of registered unemployed young persons under 29 years of age, for a known employer in the textile industry
 - 5.4. Training for certain vocations deemed deficient on the labour market
 - 5.5. Training for advanced skills in the field of information technologies that is deemed deficient on the labour market
 - 5.6. Education on business launching
6. Employment Subsidies
 - 6.1. Subsidy for employment
 - 6.2. Subsidy for employment of disabled persons
7. Internship programs
8. Survey on vacant job positions
9. Economic strengthening of women – victims of domestic violence
10. Support Program for the Roma

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and IOM implemented a joint project on - "Prevention of Irregular Migration through the Enhancement of Decentralized Labour Promotion Measures for Vulnerable Groups"

The following are the activities implemented as part of this project:

- A total of 80 beneficiaries (Roma from Kocani, Kumanovo and Stip) attended training courses for vocations deemed deficient on the labour market. All beneficiaries passed the final exam with success and were awarded certificates for the acquired qualifications. Upon completion of the training courses, the firms, where the practical training took place, expressed their interest to employ 30 persons, out of whom 23 have already started to work, and 6 persons will commence their work in the shoemaking business as of June 1, 2011.
- A total of 30 beneficiaries (Roma from Kocani, Kumanovo and Stip) started with their on-the-job coaching in identified firms.
- A total of 21 beneficiaries from Kumanovo and Stip attended primary education for adults and have acquired diplomas for completed primary education. Implementation of primary education lessons for adults for additional 15 persons from Kocani who have not completed their primary education is ongoing.
- 60 women of Roma ethnic background visited sessions on topics relating to: active measures for employment of the Roma population, health protection, discrimination and methods for protection against discrimination, implementation of the right to social protection. These lectures were delivered by relevant representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Health.
- Two workshops were organized for the preparation of Local Action Plans on Employment for the Municipalities of Kumanovo, Kocani and Stip.

Activities were organized for capacity building of the Roma Non-Governmental Organizations focusing on project management, project development, fundraising, lobbying and promotion of activities for social and economic inclusion of the Roma population, as well as training in English language in the field of project reporting.

In the area of housing, projects related to improvement of infrastructure were implemented in 2010 in the amount of 9.221.213 MKD.

In April 2011 the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a Declaration for improving the position and rights of Roma. The aim of the Declaration is to urge the Government and state authorities, civil society, associations and foundations, the local self-government, commercial entities, scientific and cultural institutions and media in the country to further strengthen and implement the effective measures and policies to promote human rights and social and economic situation of the Roma and the Roma community in the country.

Article 6 of the Framework Convention Tolerance and intercultural dialogue

As noted in the Advisory Committee's Opinion, the institutional framework for tolerance and dialogue has been established, including in ethnically mixed municipalities.

One of the five strategic goals of the 2011-2015 Program of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia is maintenance of good inter-ethnic relations on the basis of the principles of mutual respect and the implementation of the Ohrid Framework agreement. The Government pledges to promote peaceful and harmonious development of society through continual dialogue and consistent implementation of the principle of equitable representation. Full protection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity is guaranteed.

This year, the Republic of Macedonia marks the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which reflects the multiculturalism of the Macedonian society. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Secretariat for Implementation of the Framework Agreement continue to implement key aspects of the Agreement.

In order to raise the awareness of the importance of the OFA and of further improvement of inter-ethnic relations, the Secretariat for the Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement prepared a special program for cooperation with NGOs, and financed projects in this area. In 2010 and 2011, a total funding of 400.000 Euro has been allocated for this purpose.

The 2010-2012 Strategy for public informing about the process of implementation of the Framework Agreement has been launched. The said Strategy is aimed at ensuring transparency of work in this area. In addition, an Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy, as well as a brochure about the work and activities of the Secretariat for the Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement has been prepared.

Under the **UN Joint Programme “Enhancing inter-ethnic dialogue”** in direction of stimulating interaction and dialogue between young people with different ethnic background, youth centres in the schools of the targeted municipalities (Struga, Kicevo and Kumanovo) are being established. The idea is to provide trainings for both pupils and teachers about multiculturalism. The aim of the Programme is to promote tolerant, trustful and confident society that values its own diversity. Legal, regulatory, institutional and non-formal activities are predicted in that direction.

Police action and respect for human rights

The Sector for internal control and professional standards of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has made great efforts over the past years to raise the awareness among the members of the police forces regarding the diversity of the human rights. In this connection, the Sector pays particular attention to the cooperation with NGOs and the Ombudsman on joint trainings on respecting human rights and freedoms, for that category of employed police officers that mostly are in contact with citizens while on duty. Among others in 2009 and 2010, two trainings of this type were conducted in cooperation with the Roma NGOs f (“Mesecina” and “Arka”).

The Sector for internal control and professional standards with its representatives actively participated on trainings organized and implemented by different NGOs. A similar training was organized in 2010 by the Roma NGO “Mesecina”.

The external control of the work of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and consequently of the Sector for internal control and professional standards, is regulated with Article 39 of the Law on Internal Affairs and it is under the competence of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia (through a special commission) and the Office of the Ombudsman.

As regards the particular case of police intervention on 15 April 2010, at the market of Suto Orizari municipality – the police acted in accordance with Article 7 paragraph 1 of the Law on Police (Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia,, no.114/06 and 06/09), under which the police provides assistance during the enforcement of effective decision in the event that during the enforcement of such decision by the competent state organ or by persons authorized by special law to execute such decision, they are encountered with physical resistance or such resistance is likely to happen. In this case the police provided assistance to the control conducted by the State Inspectorate of Commerce and the Public Revenue Office. The aim of the police intervention was to re-establish public order and peace.

All cases for which the Sector has been informed that there is any harassment of citizens by the police officers, including alleged violation of freedoms and rights of persons called upon, apprehended or detained in the police procedure, the Sector acts with no exception and professionally investigates all allegations contained in the complaints, on a non-selective basis, with a non-discriminatory and equal treatment of all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender or any other affiliation. After conducted inspection the responses are delivered timely to those who lodged the complaints.

In January 2010, the Sector for internal control and professional standards amended the Rulebook for the work of the Sector and harmonized its complaints procedures with the Law on acting upon complaints and proposals.

The Sector for internal control and professional standards undertakes continuous measures to monitor the situation with respect to human rights and freedoms observance, in order to determinate irregularities, give instructions for their removal and to find accountable police officers who overstepped their authority and violated fundamental rights and freedoms of the persons in police procedure.

At the beginning of 2010, the Sector for internal control and professional standards acted upon the Action plan for prevention and repression of illegal and non-professional behavior of police officers, and organized meetings with managerial staff of police stations of general competence and with commanding officers of police stations for border control. During these meetings they were instructed to consistently respect human freedoms and rights while exercising the police authority, to consistently implement the Law for internal affairs, Law on police and the by-laws in the MOI.

The Sector for internal control and professional standards continuously works on strengthening the work capacities in order to prevent illegal and non-professional actions, including violations of human rights by police officers. In that respect, changes were introduced in the working methodology, selection of professional staff, in-service training, and technical equipment of the Sector. With the new systematization of the Sector, the number of executive officers was increased. At the same time, with the new organizational structure in the Section for professional standards and prevention, the focus is placed on the preventive work in direction of understanding and eliminating the

situations and phenomena which influence and lead to non-professional and illegal actions and behavior of the police officers. The Sector for internal control and professional standards meets with related services for internal control from the region in order to exchange experiences and implement the positive practices of other services within the framework of the Sector. At the same time, the Sector for internal control and professional standards through the TAIEX program of the European commission realized study visits in several European countries in order to obtain experiences for detection of police torture and protection of fundamental human freedoms and rights while they exercise their powers in accordance with international standards.

Professional training takes significant place in the Program of work of the Sector. Trainings are based on fundamental values of democracy, rule of law, ethical conduct and protection of human rights and freedoms, in line with the strategic goals of the Ministry of Interior. For successful implementation of the trainings, the Sector cooperates with OSCE, ICITAP, Training Center in MOI and other institutions.

Article 8 of the Framework Convention

The right to manifest religion or belief and to establish religious institutions, organizations and associations

Detailed information on the provisions of the Law on the Legal Status of a Church, Religious Community and Religious Group has been provided in the Third Report of the Republic of Macedonia on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

The Law on the Legal Status of a Church, Religious Community and Religious Group provides for equal legal status of all churches, religious communities and religious groups, as well as equal opportunities for their registration, performing religious rites, obtaining religious education, building houses of worship or founding religious schools. The Venice Commission delivered two positive opinions on this law, as well as on its draft version. The Law does not discriminate against any religious group, nor allows any unlawful interference by the state in the rights of religious entities and their members. In this context, it must be underlined that the Law has not been designed to prevent any religious community to gain legal status.

Under the Law, Article 9(1): “A church, religious community and religious group are entered in the Single Court Register of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups, whereby they acquire the status of a legal entity.” Skopje II Basic Court in Skopje is in charge for registering churches, religious communities and religious groups under the Article 11(1). So far no application for registration of a church, religious group or religious community by the name “Serbian Orthodox Church” has been submitted to Skopje II Basic Court.

Every year on Vidovdan, highly respected religious holiday among all Serbs, a liturgy in the Serbian language takes place in the Macedonian Orthodox Church “St. Archangel Michael” in Skopje..

Article 10 of the Framework Convention

Use of minority languages in communication with public authorities and by public authorities

Since the adoption of the Law on the language spoken by over 20% of the population, including in the units of local self-government, the use of the language of other communities has been improved, in particular the use of the Albanian language. Major results have been achieved in the use of the language of the communities at the local level. Amendments made to the Law on languages in 2011, allow the representatives of the Government who speak other language than the Macedonian, to use their mother tongue when speaking in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. The Secretariat for the Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement has prepared an Action plan for implementation of the Law on languages, which is being considered by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

Multicultural and Intercultural education

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia undertakes a series of activities in order to foster mutual respect and understanding among different ethnic communities in the area of education. There are on-going activities for implementation of the Strategy for Integrated Education, adopted in October 2010. Since 2010, there have been working meetings on regular basis, organized for review of textbooks, then regarding proper qualification of teachers, as well as on the promotion of integration through joint activities, and regarding the issue of change of competences in the area of education in line with the decentralization process. Program 4 related to "Promotion, coordination and monitoring of an integrated education system" is currently implemented, in line with the 2012-2013 Strategic Plan of the Secretariat for the Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

Situation of the Roma

The "Inclusion of Roma children in public pre-schools" is a two year extended project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in cooperation with 18 Local Self-Governments¹ approved by the Roma Education Fund on 14/10/2009, Project code: MAC 051 with an approved budget of 138.544 Euros.

The goal of the project is to improve and support integration of Roma children through increasing the number of Roma attendees in public pre-schools a year before entering primary education.

The project objectives are:

- 1.** Increasing the number of Roma attendees (586 children for two years of implementation) in public pre-school one year before entering primary compulsory education - in 18 municipalities in Macedonia; during the second year, the objective of the project is to enrol 310 Roma children in PSI's between the ages of 4.8 - 5.7. By the end of June 2011 there were in total 303 children enrolled. 83.44 % of the included children in the project were enrolled in primary education.

¹ The following local-self governments are supporting the project: Gazi Baba, Shuto Orizari, Chair, Karposh, Kumanovo, Delcevo, Berovo, Kocani, Vinica, Shtip, Veles, Prilep, Bitola, Kichevo, Tetovo, Gositvar, Centar, Pehchevo

2. Improving capacities of 1172 Roma parents directly, as well as 108 preschool teachers and 17 Roma assistants for supporting and encouraging development and education of Roma children, age 4.8 - 5.7 in 18 municipalities in Macedonia;

The partner organizations have organized workshops in order to raise the capacities of the Roma parents and pre-school personnel and to inform the parents about the enrollment in primary school.

3. Improving social skills and proficiency in the Macedonian language of 586 Roma children, age 4.8 – 5.7 enrolled in public pre-schools for the period of two years;

4. Increasing the abilities of teachers and assistant personnel in combating prejudice and stereotypes against Roma; Partner organizations on regular basis are contacting the pre-schools staff in order to monitor the implementation of the project and assist pre-schools in solving issues and improving the collaboration with the parents.

5. To raise the public awareness about the problems of Roma children and to involve local authorities in solving them; organized round tables with representatives of municipalities, principals of public pre-schools.

6. Encouraging and support early child development

The project “Inclusion of Roma children in public pre-schools” is supported by budget of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Roma Education Fund and included local self governments.

	2008/2009	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12*	Total Euro
REF	78295	60814	77731	64572	281412
MoLSP	175851	258600	264971	297335	996757
LSG	14512	32348	38598	31098	116556
Total	268658	351762	381300	393005	1394725

Article 14 of the Framework Convention

The right to learn the minority language and the conditions for teaching in this language

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia undertakes continuous measures to improve the conditions for teaching in the languages of ethnic communities.

For the Turkish and Serbian ethnic communities, tuition in their mother tongue is organized in primary and secondary schools. There are also Departments for the Serbian and Turkish language in higher education institutions. Bosniak, Vlach and Roma ethnic communities have optional subject in primary schools for learning their language and culture. For the Bosniak ethnic community experimental tuition in the Bosniak language is organized in the Municipalities of Saraj and Veles. Starting from the academic year 2011/2012, an optional subject for learning the Roma language and culture has been introduced in higher education institutions. The procedure for introduction of the Vlach language has commenced.

The Education Development Bureau annually organizes trainings for all teachers concerning the curricula, including teachers who belong to ethnic communities, especially those who teach the language and culture as an optional subject.

The number of Bosniak, Vlach and Roma children who attend the optional subjects in the respective languages and cultures is on the constant rise. The number of schools in which this subject is introduced is also increasing. At the start of the 2010/2011 academic year, the Directorate for the Development and Promotion of Education in Languages of the Communities, in cooperation with NGOs, started a campaign for informing the parents about the opportunities of their children to learn their mother tongue in primary school.

The Ministry of Education and Science, through the Pedagogical service and the Directorate for the Development and Promotion of Education in Languages of the Communities for the academic year 2010/11 provided new textbooks for the optional subject on the language and culture of Bosniak, Vlach and Roma, for the third, fourth and fifth grades. New announcements for publication of textbooks for higher classes are to be published.

Article 15 of the Framework Convention

Effective participation of persons belonging to minorities in public affairs

By a Decision of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, an Agency for Exercising the Rights of the Communities, under the Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Persons Belonging to the Communities that Form less than 20% of the Population of the Republic of Macedonia, has been established. The most important activities of the Agency for the year 2011 include: designing a website, implementing a project for strengthening the strategic capacities of the Agency, including several trainings of representatives of the smaller ethnic communities in the area of strategic planning, mobilization of funds, public relations, project cycle management, data gathering, human and minority rights instruments, supervision, analysis and reporting on the minority rights of the communities, advanced management and office administration.

In September and October 2011, the Agency carried out a population and household census campaign by visiting 12 census designated areas for the purpose of raising community awareness about the importance of their inclusion in the census and education. The Agency has actively participated in the Advisory Committee for drafting an analysis of the situation concerning discrimination on the grounds of ethnic affiliation. A 2011–2013 Work Program has also been prepared for the National Coordination Body for Non-Discrimination.

In the coming period, the Agency has envisaged the following activities in its strategic documents:

Employment:

- establishing a system for following the equitable representation of communities in the public sector
- increasing the rate of employment of persons belonging to the communities in the public sector by the principle of equitable representation (on the grounds of quality and quantity)

Education

- improved opportunities for mother tongue education, and increasing the number of pupils receiving instruction in their mother tongue by analyzing the situation, proposing solution to the relevant authorities and supporting initiatives

Culture

- promoted cultural heritage and cultural achievements of persons belonging to the communities, by supporting traditional and modern events and initiatives

At present, the Agency is working on the database for equitable representation of the communities, which will be established by the end of 2011. To date, data have been collected from approximately 70% of the institutions, local governments and public enterprises in the Republic of Macedonia.

The improvement of the equitable representation of non-majority communities in the administration, at central and local level, remains to be a strategic goal of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and is part of the general strategy of the Government adopted in December 2010. The Government adopted the 2010-2015 Strategy for Public Service Reform, as well as an Action Plan for its implementation based on expert and comparative experiences.

The 2011 Program of employment of persons belonging to communities is the master plan of the Secretariat for Implementation of the Framework Agreement pursued with the ultimate goal of upgrading equitable representation in the public service. According to the said Program, 600 new employments have been planned for which public announcements have been published periodically in the course of 2011 for all groups of civil servants. Funds in the amount of MKD 544,150,000 (about EUR 1 mill.) under the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia (K5 program) are allocated for the implementation of the Program.

Furthermore, the Government has assessed that the public service reform needs to be concentrated in a single state administrative body (Ministry of Information Society and Administration) in order that strategies and plans in this reform area are undertaken in an organized and coordinated manner. Considering the importance of public service reforms, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has demonstrated its political commitment in this regard, by establishing a Special Group for Public Administration Reform, co-chaired by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the European Commission. The dialogue between the two parties is pursued under the already established format of two meetings annually.

Article 17

On 2 October 2011 the Agreement for Conditions of Travel of Citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and of the Republic of Serbia was signed. The Agreement will facilitate crossing of the state border for holders of biometric ID cards (instead of passports). The Agreement is in the parliamentary procedure and is placed on the agenda (for adoption) by Parliament on 5 December 2011 .