

The following appendix does not form part of ECRI's analysis and proposals concerning the situation in "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

APPENDIX

ECRI wishes to point out that the analysis contained in its second report on “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, is dated 16 June 2000, and that any subsequent development is not taken into account.

In accordance with ECRI's country-by-country procedure, a national liaison officer was nominated by the authorities of “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” to engage in a process of confidential dialogue with ECRI on its draft text on “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and a number of her comments were taken into account by ECRI, and integrated into the report.

However, following this dialogue, the national liaison officer expressly requested that the following observations on the part of the authorities of “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” be reproduced as an appendix to ECRI's report.

OBSERVATIONS PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF “THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA” CONCERNING ECRI’S REPORT ON “THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA”

I. Access to public services

Access to education

Paragraph 25: With respect to the last sentence of this paragraph, which suggests introduction of bilingual classes as a measure improving integration, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia would like to inform that in the last several years the Ministry of Education has been implementing the Mosaic Project in pre-school education institutions, in cooperation with international non-governmental organizations. The project envisages establishment of bilingual classes (the children are of Macedonian and Albanian nationality). The teachers speak both languages and are adequately trained to carry out bilingual instruction. This is a pilot project, while parents can decide on such a form of instruction on voluntary basis. The project results are positive.

However, introduction of bilingual classes in primary or secondary education requires much more serious analysis and preparation. In this respect and taking into consideration the several decade long tradition of full education in mother tongue, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia considers that the introduction of bilingual classes (in which instruction would be carried in two languages) would cause negative reaction by persons belonging to minorities who follow instruction in their mother tongue. They would consider such an instruction to be a "restriction" of their constitutional right. They consider that such measures are used for purposes of forced integration, which in time could result into assimilation. Persons belonging to minorities in the Republic of Macedonia are indeed proud of their different cultural and linguistic tradition, which they have been nurturing for centuries. After all, it should be reminded that the Republic of Macedonia is one of the rare countries in which democracy successfully functions in a multi-cultural environment and which has a developed system of protection of the rights and of the cultural diversity of persons belonging to ethnic minorities.

In such conditions, the eventual realization of the idea for bilingual classes could be counter productive. This instead of contributing to the strengthening of integration processes among the young people belonging to various ethnic groups could have an entirely negative effect on the process, and on the overall inter-ethnic relations in the state.

Respecting the ECRI recommendations, the Government considers that there are no legal, political and socio-cultural conditions for the eventual realization of this recommendation. Of course, the Ministry of Education and the expert pedagogical bodies could take it into consideration and review the eventual need of organizing optional bilingual instruction (bilingual instruction as a possibility if parents and children would like to follow such instruction). However, even in such a form, bilingual instruction would be by definition more expensive and would require appropriate technical conditions.

Section II: Issues of particular concern

N. Interethnic Relations

Paragraph 38, 40. With respect to the referred to paragraphs the Government of the Republic of Macedonia would like to underline that the remarks and considerations contained in the third and in the fourth sentence (referring to different restaurants, different cafes, different stores, different media) as well as those contained in the fifth sentence are exaggerated. Such a strict division of a society (especially in a multi-cultural society that has been functioning for generations) does not reflect the Macedonian reality. The different cultures, traditions, languages and religions of the various ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia are for centuries old reality. However, such a situation has never generated hatred that would lead to full separation of society as such. On the contrary, people of different ethnic, cultural and linguistic origin have lived and live peacefully together, respecting each other. Consequently, there is no violence or conflict in the collective historic memory of ethnic groups. The mixture of cultures and traditions has always been part of the cultural treasury of Macedonia, which is an excellent example of free expression and fostering of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. Historically speaking, there is not a single period in which forced integration or assimilation, through the imposition of a certain cultural matrix as the official one, has been insisted upon.

Such a tradition at first glance may prompt a mistaken impression of a non-integrated, divided society. What would be of relevance from the ECRI perspective is the following: whether or not such explicit cultural differences lead to hatred or to direct or indirect discrimination. Such a phenomenon is not to be found in Macedonia. Certain cases of manifestation of intolerance are marginal and do not present sufficient grounds to conclude that the Macedonian society is divided and that insufficient is done with respect to the integration of minorities. Integration must be voluntary. The best example in this regard is the young, primarily urban generation, who increasingly abandons the traditional elements of personal identity.”