



Election Day Macedonia, 22nd of March 2009 OHRID Institute Report

Skopje, 23th of March, 2009 - The OHRID Institute for the second time organized a project which includes joint cooperation and mutual dialogue among all political parties in Republic of Macedonia. The OHRID Institute together with the OSCE Mission in Skopje implemented a pre-election project named: Election Awareness and Party Responsibility 2009.

The June 2008 parliamentary elections showed deficiencies in the conduct of the election campaign and the elections themselves. Especially in the western parts of the country the pre-election campaign and the lack of communication between political leaders on a local level lead to strong intra-ethnic tensions and violence within the Albanian population. The tension caused severe damage during the Election Day on June 1st 2008 and there were two re-runs of the elections in certain municipalities due to severe inconsistencies in the election process. The conflicts which followed the elections in Republic of Macedonia influenced the overall development of the country.

The project implemented in February/March 2009 addressed these particular issues, brought all political leaders together on one table discussing and resolving the most burning issues which were obstacle for democratic election campaign and election process. The project's overall goal was to work with political parties and to improve the conduct of their activists in times of elections, thus reducing the potential for electoral conflicts and irregularities.

The project included roundtables and meetings in municipalities in the former conflict area which have previously experienced difficult elections. The participants in the forums were cooperative, open for discussions and with the help of the OHRID Institute they focused on the mutual interest for all, and most importantly, for the Republic of Macedonia.

The results of the project are more than evident; Republic of Macedonia held democratic local and presidential elections on the 22nd of March 2009 without any irregularities or conflicts. This is major success for the OHRID Institute, namely it managed to bring the opponent parties together on one table and offer incentives for further dialogue, cooperation and collaboration.

From the joint Press Release of the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the 22 March 2009 Presidential and municipal elections in Macedonia:

(The international election observation mission is a joint undertaking of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which is only observing the presidential elections, while the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress) is only observing the municipal elections)



“The first round of yesterday's presidential and municipal elections in Macedonia met most international standards, although some challenges remain to be addressed. The elections were well administered and free of the violent incidents that clouded last year's parliamentary elections. Election day was peaceful and the voting process was generally well managed, although there were procedural irregularities and the counting process was assessed less positively.

The authorities and political party leaders made concerted efforts to ensure the elections took place in a calm environment. The elections were preceded by a vigorous and highly visible campaign, with a multiplicity of candidates and parties providing a genuine choice for the voters. However, the observers also noted that an atmosphere of distrust persisted to some extent, as demonstrated by numerous troubling allegations of election-related pressure or intimidation, especially targeting public employees, during the pre-election period”.

"It is a pleasure for me to see that this country has made a number of steps along the democratic road that it returned to during the rerun of the elections last summer. Irregularities and a lack of trust remain - and these must be dealt with - but there is no doubt that you have made further progress in holding elections according to international commitments," said OSCE PA Vice President Pia Christmas-Møller, Special Co-ordinator appointed to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission.

"The political parties and the authorities in Macedonia have learned positive lessons from the June 2008 parliamentary elections. Security during this election campaign and on voting day was significantly improved. It is clear that these elections made progress in restoring the confidence of citizens through a democratic process and also did a lot in international terms, for proving that Macedonia has a democratic capacity and ability to organize peaceful, fair and free elections. We will be watching closely for continued progress in the second round of the elections" says Biljana Janeva, Executive Director of OHRID Institute.