

## **OSCE MISSION TO SKOPJE**

The Mission's key priorities are advancing constructive inter-ethnic relations and supporting the further implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement and its essential pillars: anti-discrimination, education, decentralization, equitable representation, smaller communities and the use of languages. It works with authorities to implement reforms in areas such as elections, democratic policing, local governance and the judiciary. The Mission monitors and conducts regular visits to local communities and maintains a communication network with political representatives, civil society members, religious leaders and law enforcement officials.

### **Mandate**

A key priority for the Mission is monitoring and supporting the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement that put an end to the 2001 armed conflict in the country. The Agreement is meant to guarantee the participation of all ethnic communities in political, social and cultural life. It focuses on decentralization, non-discrimination, language and education rights, as well as equitable representation of all citizens. The Mission's mandate additionally covers police and legislative reforms, rule of law and different areas of good governance.

### **What we do**

The Mission conducts regular monitoring visits to local communities and maintains a communication network with political representatives, civil society members, religious leaders and law enforcement officials. It works with the authorities to implement an integrated education system and builds the capacity of state officials on international democratic standards and principles. It also helps with electoral reforms, promotes minority rights, trains police officers, and assists with the judicial reform process.

### **Arms control**

The Mission supports initiatives to decrease the illegal possession of weapons by training the police and raising the awareness of citizens about how to prevent gun violence.

### **Border management**

The Mission maintains a permanent field presence in the border zones of the former crisis area. Its work includes regular visits to meet the population and officials involved in border security, as well as support for the co-operation and rapid information sharing of the border police with their counterparts in neighbouring countries.

### **Combating human trafficking**

The Mission helps strengthen co-operation among national institutions, authorities, and civil society, building the capacities of all those involved to ensure a victim-centred and human

rights-based approach in protecting victims of this serious crime. It also works towards strengthening regional co-operation and empowering grass-root organizations in combating child trafficking in the region.

### **Combating terrorism**

The Mission supports national public safety agencies in strengthening their institutional and operational capacities to combat terrorism. It organizes high quality and innovative training courses on the use of modern analysis techniques to identify and follow the trace of criminal organizations, terrorism financing and the flow of “dirty money” as well as the prevention of radicalization and recruitment of potential terrorists. To promote the co-operation among law enforcement agencies and strengthen their international network, the Mission also supports the participation of country officials in international conferences on the prevention and countering of terrorism.

### **Conflict prevention and resolution**

The Mission monitors the security situation in the country by conducting regular field trips and meetings with municipal and religious leaders, community representatives, members of non-governmental organizations, political authorities and law enforcement officials. Thus it fulfills an important early warning function. It also assists with confidence building activities between the communities and provides mediation in case of tensions.

### **Education**

The Mission supports the government strategy on integrated education to allow all communities to interact from an early age. This includes supporting joint activities in schools and research as well as tailor-made capacity building projects. The Mission also provides advice and assistance to a variety of groups involved in education, such as representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and its institutions, teacher training faculties, representatives of local self-government units and schools, students and parents.

### **Elections**

The Mission assists the country with the reform of its electoral system. It helps election officials and others involved in electoral matters to apply international standards and good practices, and assists electoral institutions with remedying potential shortcomings and ambiguities in electoral legislation, procedures and the voters’ list.

### **Gender equality**

The Mission has contributed to setting up and improving the country’s legislative and institutional infrastructure in the field of gender equality and non-discrimination. It assisted the government with drafting the Law for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men. It also initiates discussions on gender mainstreaming and supports capacity building for establishing a female mentoring network for the National Council for Gender Equality.

### **Good governance**

To strengthen democratic governance and to foster closer and more constructive inter-ethnic relations, the Mission works with local and central government institutions on initiatives that

support democratic governance principles and the values of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. It assists key government bodies and state authorities to respond more effectively to challenges such as implementing the principles of equitable representation, transparency and accountability in the public administration, the use of languages or the transferring of competences and resources to local level.

### **Human rights**

The Mission works with the country's Anti-Discrimination Commission and the Ombudsman to help bring human rights legislation in line with non-discrimination principles and to include provisions that safeguard equal treatment for all. It also monitors hate crimes and hate speech and trains legal practitioners and civil society on international standards in this field.

### **Minority rights**

To strengthen inter-ethnic relations in the country, the Mission works with the government and civil society on initiatives to reform the education system, enhance equitable representation, strengthen the use of minority languages, curb discrimination and build confidence among communities. It also fosters regional networks to build sustainable institutions for the respective communities and to protect their rights.

### **Policing**

The Mission helps the host country develop a community-oriented police service in line with democratic principles and international human rights standards. This includes the furthering of police reform and assistance with the professionalization of the police. It offers customized training courses for police officials on issues such as the fight against organized crime and terrorism, preventive policing and how to deal with inter-ethnic problems. The Mission also supports the country's police training centre and helps strengthen the relationship between the police and the media.

### **Roma and Sinti**

The Mission supports the government in its efforts to implement national policy commitments related to Roma affairs. It offers political and policy support and guidance to political representatives, senior civil servants and Romani civil society organizations. The Mission also supports and implements a number of projects to foster the social inclusion of Roma, for example initiatives of local non-governmental organizations that run mobile legal aid offices and financing the enrolment of Roma children in public pre-school.

### **Rule of law**

Key priorities in this area are to strengthen the independence of the judiciary and to assist the legal reform process. Promoting the participation of all ethnic communities in public life is an important tool to secure equal access of all citizens to justice, which in turn helps strengthen democratic progress in the country. The Mission organizes train-the-trainers courses and prepares educational materials, monitors the legislative process and offers technical comments to the judiciary, provides expertise to law makers to support the legislative drafting process and also makes legal resource material available. It monitors trials of high profile cases that might have an impact on the security situation or inter-ethnic relations in the country, and

helps establish an objective and merit-based system to evaluate the work of public prosecutors.

### **Tolerance and non-discrimination**

Support to anti-discrimination mechanisms is part of the efforts undertaken by the Mission to assist the full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The focus lies on developing legislation and policies, research activities and public outreach. It helps build the capacities of legal practitioners through co-operation with the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors and assists with strengthening regional initiatives on anti-discrimination.