

**ECMI PRESS RELEASE**  
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**CONCLUSION OF THE ECMI PROJECT "ECMI NGO NETWORK FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA"**

The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), based in Flensburg, Germany, announces the conclusion of the project *ECMI NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia*.

The ECMI NGO Network was established in 2001 as a member-driven Network aimed at improving interethnic relations by development of cooperation among member NGOs in identifying common ground for action on issues related to advancing interethnic dialogue in the Republic of Macedonia. Furthermore, this Network of 78 grass-root NGOs aimed at enhancing the credibility of the NGOs among their local communities and at strengthening the capacity through conceptualization and implementation of joint projects.

In order to achieve these aims six Regional Centres at Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Bitola and Shtip were established as neutral grounds for all NGO members in developing, coordinating and implementing joint projects on issues that cut across ethnic ties. The Network established its own organizational structure headed by the Coordinative Body, composed of 13 members, 12 chosen on the grounds of different regional and ethnic affiliations and 1 ECMI representative, which served as the network facilitator.

Last year, the Coordinative Body cooperated with the ECMI as facilitator in elaborating a strategy for the upcoming period in order to outline the Network future development and maintenance. The initiated discussion among the Network members led to:

- The establishment of Regional NGO Coalitions in Bitola, Tetovo and Kumanovo as formal coalitions that will primarily operate at the local level,

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- The creation of an independent national NGO network – the Initiative for Society Development, which will operate with a new mission focusing on economic development through participation, integration and equal opportunities.
- The development of sector based networks (an environmental network, a youth multicultural initiatives network, an educational network and a working group for minority issues).

By the closure of the ECMI project, these initiatives have resulted in independent and sustainable structures. ECMI welcomes the creation of these new civil society formations and wish the participating member organisations the best of luck in their future work.

For more information about this 3 years project, please consult the website of the ECMI-NGO Network at [www.ecmingonet.org.mk](http://www.ecmingonet.org.mk) or contact Verica Grdanoska, ECMI Outreach Manager in Skopje (ECMI Regional Office Skopje, Majka Tereza 13a, Tel.: +389 (0)2 3215 637; 3215 638 - Fax: +389 (0)2 3215 639). For more information on ECMI: [www.ecmi.de](http://www.ecmi.de)

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