

ECMI PRESS RELEASE
Skopje 6th December 2002

**2ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE
"ECMI NGO NETWORK FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF
MACEDONIA" AND 1ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE "ECMI REGIONAL NGO CENTRES"
(Skopje, Friday 6th December 2002)**

The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) based in Flensburg, Germany, is pleased to announce the successful completion of two years of the "**ECMI-NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia**" and one year of the "**ECMI Regional NGO Centres**" on Monday 9th December 2002 from 10:00-12:00 at the Hotel Continental (Boulevard Aleksandar Makedonski bb, Skopje 1000, Macedonia, Cristal hall.). This event will be followed by a lunch reception.

- The **ECMI Regional NGO Centres** were established in 2002 in the following six cities: Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Bitola and Shtip. The Skopje Centre also serves as the headquarters for this initiative and for ECMI in the Republic of Macedonia.

These Regional NGO Centres serve the aim of improving interethnic tolerance, respect for differences and dialogue among all communities in the Republic of Macedonia. They aspire to enhance the capacity of member non-governmental organizations (NGOs) subscribing to these aims and facilitate the development and implementation of joint interethnic projects on the basis of locally established priorities. The *Regional NGO Centres* also seek cooperation of local administration, while maintaining full independence in the design and execution of the projects.

- The idea to launch the Regional NGO Centres builds on the ECMI project to establish an **ECMI NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia**. This project was launched by ECMI in December 2000 in Flensburg as part of a series of new initiatives by ECMI in South East Europe. The project was made possible through the support of the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (FRESTA- Secretariat for Peace and Stability), the British Embassy in Skopje and the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ECMI NGO Network consists of about 60 domestic NGOs representing all major ethnic communities from around the country. These NGOs have recognized that interethnic relations were at a critical stage and that, because of the recent crisis, it was more important than ever for the NGO community to develop cooperation.

The ECMI-NGO Network aims to strengthen the capacities of the Macedonian NGO sector to generate joint projects with an important interethnic dimension and to implement them. **Joint pilot projects** developed with the advice and expertise of ECMI have been successfully implemented and will be presented at this event in order to attract the interest of international donor community.

The ECMI Project in Macedonia has been funded by generous contributions from the:



A detailed **Memorandum for Cooperation**, including Criteria for participation in the ECMI-NGO Network and a Guide to Good Practices of NGOs have also been adopted and put to use by the Network.

The thirteen members Coordinating Body, which is representative of the ethnic and regional composition of this Network, will present its work. The Regional Centre representatives will present the activities and the challenges being faced by them in their work.

The recently upgraded web site of the network will be presented.

For more information, please see the recently upgraded website of the ECMI-NGO Network at **www.ecmingonet.org.mk** or contact Sunoor Verma, ECMI Regional Representative in Skopje (ECMI Regional Office Skopje, Drezdenska 9, Tel.: +389 (0)2 391 451; 391 452 - Fax: +389 (0)2 391 453). For more information on ECMI: **www.ecmi.de**.

The ECMI Project in Macedonia has been funded by generous contributions from the:



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