

## **The Effects of the Work of Committee and Commissions on Interethnic Relations in Republic of Macedonia**

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**Abstract:** The Committee and the Commissions on Interethnic Relations are two of the several Consocial instruments, introduced in 2001 following the conclusion of peace agreement and cease of armed conflict between forces under control of the Government of Republic of Macedonia and insurgent National Liberation Army. Principle task of both the Committee and the Commissions on Interethnic Relations is to monitor, discuss and give suggestions to the Parliament i.e. to the Municipal Councils on the manners of advancement of interethnic relations. In the article, the author is evaluating the effects of the work of the Committee and the Commissions through conducting research on various issues related to the structure and the performance of these institutions. The results show that the work of the Committee and the Commissions has inconsiderable influence on the advancement of interethnic relations. The author is suggesting that the partisan composition of these two institutions should be replaced with no partisan composition, and the authorities should provide structural and financial assistance for sustainability of the Commissions for Interethnic relations.

**Keywords:** interethnic relations; consocial democracy; partisanship

### **1. Introduction**

Republic of Macedonia is landlocked country situated in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, with population of over two million people and diverse ethnic structure. Macedonians comprise 64% while Albanians 25% of Macedonia's population<sup>1</sup> (Државен завод за статистика - State's Statistic Office, 2005). Macedonians and

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<sup>1</sup> These are the numbers according to the last census of population held in 2001. These numbers are often disputed especially by members of the Albanian ethnic community, claiming that the number of Albanians in Macedonia is close to 30% of the total population. Unfortunately the latest census of population from 2011 was stopped without any valid explanation from the authorities, therefore the numbers from 2001 census are still the only official numbers to be referred to.

Albanians speak different languages and belong to different religious groups<sup>1</sup>. In 1991 Republic of Macedonia stepped out of the Yugoslav federation and became independent state. Ever since, it seems that there are irreconcilable differences between political and academic elites of Macedonians and Albanians, regarding the manner in which the state should balance between the interests of the two largest ethnic groups in the country. Most academics and politicians from Macedonian ethnic community, define Republic of Macedonia as a civil state that guarantees the rights and freedoms of ethnic minorities in accordance with the existing international standards (Шкарѝк - Shkarich, 1994, p. 143). On the other side, most academics and politicians from Albanian ethnic community, disagree with defining Albanians as national minority, and instead demand Albanians to be treated as constitutive nation enjoying equal rights with the members of the Macedonian ethnic community, especially regarding equal access to public funds, equal access to jobs in state's administration and public sector, and equal treatment for the Albanian language and culture (Rexhepi, 2005, p. 5) The failure of the political elites of Macedonians and Albanians to reconcile the afore mentioned differences has lead to accumulation of dissatisfaction and subsequently to emergence of armed conflict in 2001, between the joint police and military forces (comprised of ethnic Macedonians and members of few smaller ethnic groups) and the paramilitary National Liberation Army - NLA (comprised of ethnic Albanians). The armed conflict from 2001 was stopped following the interference from the international community<sup>2</sup> and the signing of the peace accord, widely known as the "Ohrid Agreement", signed in August 2001 (Рамковен Договор - Ohrid Agreement, 2001). In its essence, the mechanisms for building the post conflict society coincide with consociational mechanisms for organization of multiethnic societies, best defined in the work of the renowned political scientists Arend Lijphart (Lijphart, 1977, pp. 3-5).

The provisions of the Ohrid Agreement (Рамковен Договор - Ohrid Agreement, 2001) paved the way toward subsequent changes in the Constitution and legislation, which is bringing us to the establishment of the Parliamentary Committee and Municipal Commissions on Interethnic Relations. The Committee on Interethnic Relations (the Committee) was established with the 12<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia in 2001 (Устав на Република Македонија, 1991) and constitutional provisions were further specified with the

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<sup>1</sup> Macedonians predominantly declare as Eastern Orthodox Christians, while Albanians as Muslims.

<sup>2</sup> Representatives of the European Union and the United States of America.

Law on the Committee on Interethnic Relations from 2007 (Закон за комитетот за односи меѓу заедниците, 2007). The Municipal Commissions on Interethnic Relations (the Commissions) were established by the 55<sup>th</sup> article of the Law on Local Government from 2002 (Закон за локална самоуправа, 2002).

The main task of both (the Committee and the Commissions) is to monitor, discuss and give suggestions to the Parliament i.e. to the Municipal Councils on the manners of advancement of interethnic relations. The Committee consists of 19 members of Parliament (MPs), seven from the Macedonian ethnic community, another seven from the Albanian ethnic community, and five others, each representing the following smaller ethnic communities: Roma, Turks, Bosnians, Serbs, and Vlachs. Aside from giving suggestions to the Parliament regarding the manners of advancing interethnic relations, the Committee is entitled to make the decision on the manner of voting in a case of contest on whether the proposed legislation should be voted with "double majority vote"<sup>1</sup>.

The Municipal Commissions on Interethnic Relations consist of equal number of representatives from each of the ethnic communities that are living in the municipality. In accordance with the legal provision (Закон за локална самоуправа, 2002), the Commissions are established in every municipality in which at least 20% of the total population belongs to one of the non-majority ethnic communities. Following this criteria the Commissions have been established in 19 municipalities, plus in the city of Skopje<sup>2</sup>. In total, there are 33 Commissions established in the same number of municipalities<sup>3</sup>. Even though thirteen out of thirty three municipalities do not bare any legal obligation for the establishment of municipal Commission for Interethnic Relations, the Municipal Councils of these municipalities decided to establish Commissions, hoping that their work will contribute toward maintenance and advancement of the relations between ethnic communities in their respective municipalities.

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<sup>1</sup> In cases where the legislation proposed concerns issues of relevance for non-majority communities, beside majority vote the legislation proposed should also be backed by a majority vote of the MPs from the Albanian and other non-majority ethnic communities. In this manner members of non-majority communities are given the opportunity to put a veto on any harmful legislation, with the vote of 10 (out of 19) members of the Committee.

<sup>2</sup> Skopje is the capital city of Republic of Macedonia and enjoys different legal status compared to all the other municipalities in the country.

<sup>3</sup> The total number of municipalities in Republic of Macedonia is 64.

## **2. Research Objective**

Although leading politicians are often in favor of making statements about the importance of the work of the Committee and the Commissions for preservation and advancement of good interethnic relations in Republic of Macedonia, the work of these two institutions and its results have never been subjected to any serious debate in the Parliament or in academic community. Bearing in mind the importance of the Committee and the Commissions as one of the crucial consociational mechanisms for maintenance of the social cohesion and balancing between the interests of the two dominant and other smaller ethnic communities, the objective of this research is to scrutinize and assess the effects of the work of the Committee and the Commissions on advancement of interethnic relations between the communities in Republic of Macedonia.

The research departs from the hypothesis that the Committee and the Commissions for Interethnic Relations do not have any considerable effect upon the advancement of interethnic relations. In relation to the general objective of the research, the research includes several specific objectives, focusing on revealing: the actual social circumstances and theoretical assumptions at the time of introduction of the Committee and the Commissions, as well as the expected effects from their work, the most important factors of influence upon the work of the Committee and the Commissions, the topics/issues addressed by the Committee and the Commissions; the overall working intensity and the responsiveness in situations when certain events result in prospects for deterioration of interethnic relations and the outcomes from the suggestions and the initiatives submitted by the Committee and the Commissions to the Parliament and to the Municipal Councils.

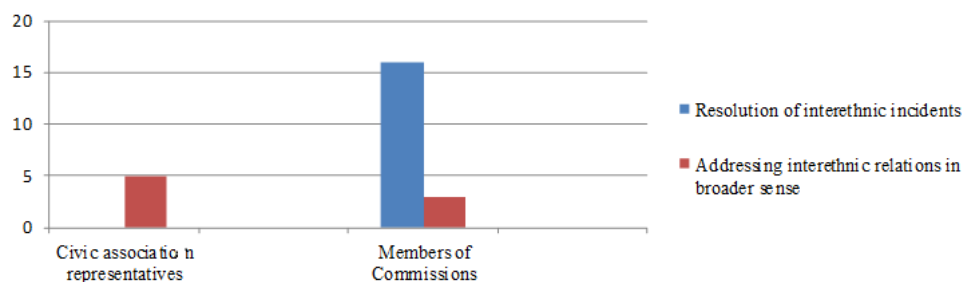
## **3. Research Methodology**

Qualitative methodology was the main research method used. Research data was gathered from books, academic papers, published researches, municipal statutes, laws, and transcripts from sessions of Parliament and from the working sessions of the Committee for Interethnic Relations. With concern to the section of the research related to the Commissions, the author conducted 19 semi structured interviews with members from 12 different Commissions, 5 unstructured interviews with representatives of civic organizations, 3 semi structured interviews with university professors, one interview with a member of the group of experts

who have prepared the first draft of the Law on Local Self-governance, and one member of Parliament. With concern to the section of the research related to the work of the Committee, the author conducted semi structured interviews with two former presidents and one deputy president of the Committee as well as with a former Secretary of the Committee for Administrative and Technical issues. The method of thematic or framework analysis, primarily used in applied political sciences (Lacey & Luff, 2001, p. 17), was used for the processing of gathered data.

#### **4. Results**

The results clearly reveal that both the Committee and the Commissions for Interethnic Relations have been established in absence of some serious analysis on the structure, the composition, and the expectations of the introduction of these institutions. It is interesting that prior to the establishment of the Committee, there was an almost identical institution with very similar functions and composition called Interethnic Relations Council. Similarly, prior to the establishment of the Commissions for Interethnic Relations, the Law on Local Government from 1995 provisioned establishment of Commission for Interethnic Relations, but these Commissions were never established. The transcripts from the session of the Parliament that adopted the amendment to the Constitution introducing the Committee for Interethnic Relations reveal that only two out of 120 MPs discussed in relation to the amendment, while the Government's representative introducing the proposed amendment, shortly explained to the MPs that the introduction of the Committee is an obligation from the Ohrid Agreement (Стенографски белешки од 3 седница на Собранието на Република Македонија - Transcripts from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, 2002, pp.18-20). Almost the same scenario has taken place with the adoption of the Law on Local Government and the introduction of the Committees. Regarding the expected effects of the work of the Committee and the Commissions, most of the interviewed stated that they expect that these institutions will contribute toward the advancement of interethnic relations, but in the case of the respondents to the question "What is the core mandate of the Commissions for Interethnic relations?" (see figure 1), the majority of the members of the Commissions responded that the core mandate of the Commissions was to solve the interethnic incidents, in case of their occurrence.



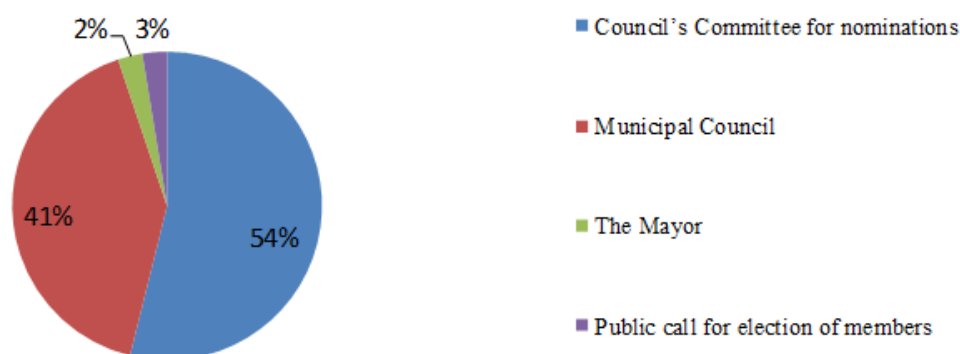
**Figure 1. Answers from 24 respondents on question: "What is the core mandate of Commissions?"**

Legal and political factors prove to be the most influential upon the work of the Committee and the Commissions. The incomprehensive provisions regulating the work of the Committee and the Commissions created many difficulties because of different interpretations of their competences. In relation to the Committee for Interethnic Relations this problem was overcome with the enactment of the Law on the Committee for Interethnic Relations in 2007. This Law listed 38 laws that require double majority vote for any future amending and provisioned that the double majority voting procedure will apply for the enactment of any future legislation concerning the use of languages, education, documents for personal identification, culture, and the use of symbols<sup>1</sup>. The mandate of Commissions is defined too broadly - bearing in mind that Commissions have mandate to address issues associated to interethnic relations in the municipality, many Commissions find difficult to determine which issues could be interpreted as interethnic? It could easily be interpreted that virtually every issue in a multiethnic municipality could be viewed through an ethnic angle.

The political factor seems to be having crucial influence on the work of both Committee and the Commissions. The boycott is the most frequent weapon used by members of the Committee when they try to avoid some of the issues on Committee's agenda. In the period between 2006 - 2008 the Committee didn't hold a single session due to boycotting, and in the period between 2006 - 2011, out of 18 convened sessions as much as 7 never took place due to boycotting. The influence of politics on the work of the Commissions is predominantly exercised through

<sup>1</sup> Meaning the flags of non-majority ethnic communities in Republic of Macedonia.

the process of nomination and election of members of the Commission. As displayed in Figure 2, Commission members are nominated either by one or more members of the Municipal Council or by Council's Committee on Elections and Appointments.



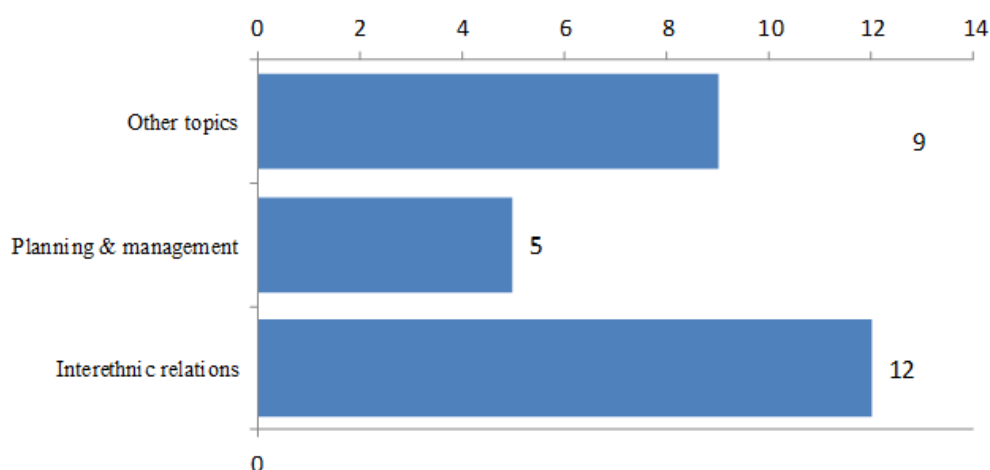
**Figure 2. Manner of nomination of members of the 33 Commissions.**

In either ways the dominant political party in the Council of the Municipality has the final say regarding Commissions' composition, because the Council of the Municipality is electing Commissions' members by majority vote.

Among other factors of influence upon the work of the Commissions, the results revealed that administrative and technical factors also have considerable influence on their work. Although these are factors of secondary importance, it often seems that the issues of administrative and technical nature appear as insurmountable impediments to their work. Such is the case with financing the work of the Commissions: according to the survey conducted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, only 3 out of 33 existing Commissions received financial support from the Budget of the Municipality based on their annual program of activities (OSCE Mission to Skopje, 2010, p.9). Many off the interviewed members of Commissions complained that the lack of finances is seriously impeding their work because they cannot make field visits. Field visits are especially important considering the fact that most of the municipalities include both urban and rural areas and Commission members don't have means to visit villages located at considerable distances.

The issues addressed in the work of the Committee include scrutinizing of draft

and existing legislation, review of various information prepared by the Government and the ministries upon Committee's request, oversight on the implementation of laws and other legal provisions, Committee management and planning, protocol addressing of foreign diplomats and other officials, and other issues.



**Figure 3. Structure of the discussed topics in the Committee for Interethnic relations**

Nonetheless, the results from Figure 3 show that topics related to Interethnic relations dominate in the work of the Committee. Or in other words, 46% of the total number of topics addressed in the Committee is related to interethnic relations. Those are the following topics: Law on the establishment of State University in Tetovo (in Albanian language), National Program for Culture 2004-2008, Law on Issuing Passports and Personal Identification Cards, Law on the Use of Symbols of the Ethnic Communities, Information from the Ministry of Interior on the status of the requests for getting Macedonian Citizenship, The status of implementation of the Albanian language in Passports and Personal Identification Cards, Discussion in relation to Government's decision that children from other ethnic communities should begin learning Macedonian language from the first year at the elementary school, Law on the Census of Population, Protests and incidents caused after the clash of young Macedonians and Albanians following the disapproval of Albanians on building church inside Skopje's citadel, Interethnic incidents following the display of Prophet Mohammed at the carnival in Vevchani, Discussing incidents between Macedonians and Albanians which were taking place



during football games and other sport events and The address of OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities related to issues concerning interethnic relations and achievement of higher degree of integration between the Macedonians and the Albanians in education. The results concerning issues addressed by the Commissions reveal that some of the most frequent issues are related to: Changing names of streets and public schools (in Debar and Tetovo), overcoming tensions that broke out as consequence of fights between students from different ethnic groups (in Sopishte, Chair, Tetovo, Kumanovo and Struga), organizing cultural activities for presentation of cultural characteristics of different ethnic communities (in Kumanovo and Tetovo), initiative for construction of new school for Albanian students (in Kumanovo), addressing the disagreements on the location for construction of new church (in Dolneni) and issuing recommendation to the Municipal Council that the ethnic structure of the employees in the municipality should correspond to the ethnic structure of the population in municipality of Debar.

The overall working intensity and responsiveness of the Committee in situations where certain events result in prospects for deterioration of interethnic relations varies between the different compositions of the Committee. The results suggest that the Committee held highest number of meetings (13) in its first composition from 2003 - 2006. But if we take into account not only the number of held sessions, but also the number of speakers, the volume of discussions, and the importance of the discussed topics, undoubtedly the most intensive activity of the Committee had taken place in its third composition between 2008 and 2011. Although the Committee in its first composition had tackled several important topics of concern for the interethnic relations, it is strange that it never discussed some very serious issues which were very important and seriously threatened to destabilize the fragile peace of the post conflict society. The issues in question are: the law on new territorial organization of the municipal borders from 2004, that was strongly contested by ethnic Macedonians and the Parliamentary opposition<sup>1</sup>, and the unilateral decision of ethnic Albanians to change the name of one elementary school in the ethnically mixed village of Shemshevo contrary to the disapproval of

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<sup>1</sup> The reorganization of Municipal Borders came as obligation from the Ohrid (peace) Agreement, and in essence members of Macedonian ethnic community were dissatisfied with the fact that the new municipal borders will shift the population ration in several municipalities in Western part of the country in favour of ethnic Albanians.

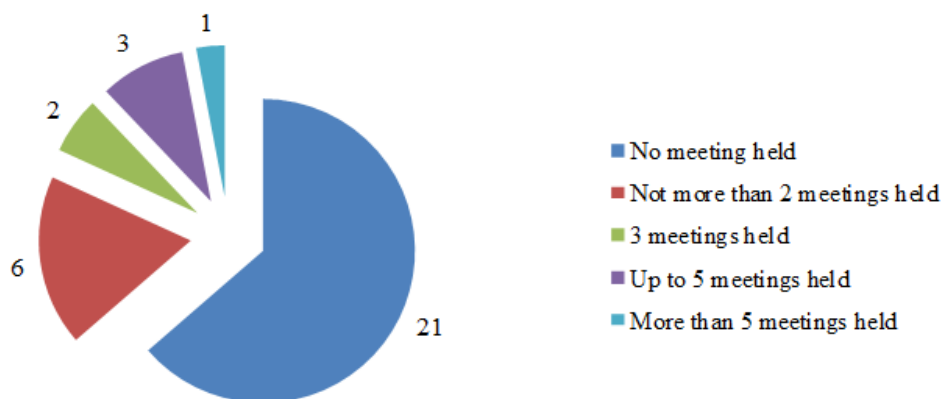
it by the ethnic Macedonians<sup>1</sup>. During the interview with the first President of the Committee - Ejup Rustemi, when asked: "Why the Committee didn't react on the incidents related to the enactment of the Law on Territorial Organization of the Municipal Borders and the situation related to the change of the school name in Shemshevo?", he replied that the Committee didn't discuss these issues because they were not included in Committee's annual working plan. Unlike in the first composition, the President of the third composition of the Committee was constantly trying to put some of the burning issues on the agenda, but was often facing boycott. With only few exceptions the results show that Commissions are considerably irresponsive in managing situations when certain events result in prospects for deterioration of interethnic relations.

Commission from municipality of Struga barely issued a press release in the case of a series of fights between Macedonian and Albanian high school students, and didn't react when citizens of Islamic profession found themselves offended by a mask presented at a local Christian carnival, and subsequently organized protest that included damaging of several churches in vicinity of Struga. In regard to the fights between ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian high school students, the reactions of Commissions in Chair, Kumanovo and Tetovo were very similar to the one in Struga. A rare example of timely and appropriate reaction came from the Commission in the Sopsishte municipality, whose members were involved in intensive activities for preventing the retaliation from people of the local Albanian community, after Albanian students were attacked and beaten in the local bus on their way back home from school.

The frequency of Commissions' meetings (according to OSCE's Survey held in the period between April 2009 and April 2010) displayed in Figure 4, is confirming the general trend of Commissions' inactivity (OSCE Mission to Skopje, 2010, p.11).

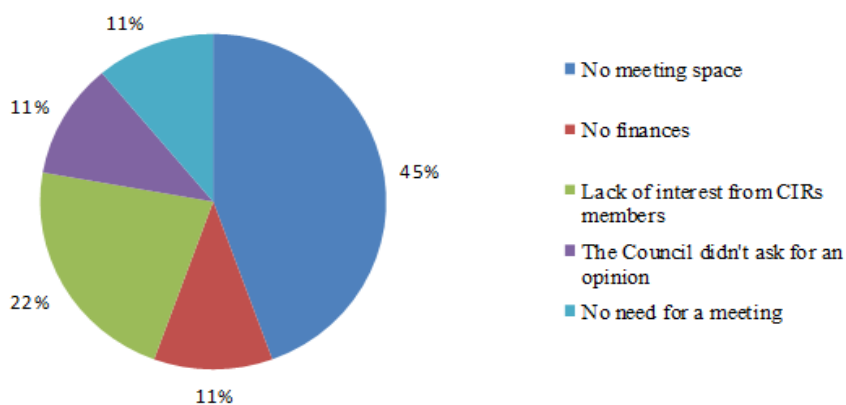
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<sup>1</sup> The change of the name of the school in Shemshevo sprang protests in several ethnically mixed Macedonian cities and many fights between Macedonian and Albanian elementary and high school students.



**Figure 4. Display of the number of meetings held by 33 Commissions in the period between April 2009 and April 2011**

Concerning the Commissions that had a frequency of three or more meetings held in the designated period, it should be noted that members of these Commissions are in the same time members of the Municipal Councils, and often holding Commission meetings parallel with the meetings of the Municipal Council. Findings of authors Neziri and Tomovska (see table 5) are showing the most common arguments stated by Commissions' members for not holding regular sessions (Neziri & Tomovska, 2011).



**Figure 5. Answers from 154 members of Commissions, when asked to state the reasons for not convening Commissions meetings on regular basis**

The results of the analysis of the proceedings from the work of the Committee on Interethnic relations show that in most of the cases where the Committee was reviewing issues of relevance for interethnic relations, the sessions of the Committee ended with adoption of conclusions and recommendations. Only on one occasion, the Committee exercised its authority on deciding on the manner in which certain draft legislation should be voted in the Parliament. On the session held in September 2010, the Committee decided that the draft of the Law on the Establishment of Macedonian Research Network does not require implementation of special voting procedure for its adoption. The analysis of the proceedings of the work of the Committee revealed that the Committee never revisited or controlled the outcomes of its conclusions and recommendations. In fact Committee's conclusions and recommendations are of declarative nature, and neither the Parliament nor any other institution proceeded in compliance with them. Concerning the final results regarding the suggestions of Commissions to the Municipal Councils, there are very few concrete suggestions submitted. The author would like to emphasize the outcome of the initiative of the Commission from Sopište municipality, where the efforts for reconciliation, following the incidents between Macedonian and Albanian students, have resulted with suggestion to the Municipal Council on establishment of a football league, allowing the students from the municipality to visit different villages, play, and mingle with peers from different nationalities. It is worth of mentioning the suggestions to the respective Municipal Council made by Commissions from Tetovo and Kumanovo, which suggested that municipality should organize cultural days, where each ethnic community will be given space and financial support to present their cultural characteristics. Both aforementioned initiatives were accepted and implemented by the respective municipalities.

## **5. Discussion**

The Committee and the Commissions for Interethnic Relations do not represent unique features of the Macedonian political system. The author Gordana Siljanovska Davkova is making reference to the existence of bodies that have very similar structure and mandate with the Committee for Interethnic Relations, such as The Round Table of the President in Estonia or the Council for Interethnic Relations in Romania (Николовска & Силјановска - Давкова, 2001, p.105). The same is valid for the Commissions for Interethnic Relations, because this concept is

well known and has been implemented around the world for more than fifty years. The author Andries Odendaal is stating that in different parts of the world Commissions exist under different names, District Policing Partnership Board in Northern Ireland, Local Peace Committees in South Africa or Local Peace Commissions in Nicaragua (Odendaal, 2010, p. 9). The results of the research show that analysis of their activity was presented to the MPs along with the legislative proposals for establishment of the Committee and the Commissions for Interethnic Relations.

There was no knowledge regarding the activity of other institutions similar to the Committee and Commissions, and the MPs voted on the establishment of the bodies practically without any discussion on the nature and implications of their introduction to country's political system. In the same time, one needs to be aware that the establishment of the Committee and the Commissions took place in the period immediately after the armed conflict in 2001, which was threatening to dissolve the country. This was a period of intensive legislative activity during which the Parliament enacted fifteen amendments to the existing constitution and had to change many important laws in order to comply with the provisions of the peace agreement that stopped the hostilities. Under these circumstances, one may understand why MPs didn't devote the necessary attention to the establishment of the Committee and the Commissions, nevertheless the results of the research clearly indicate that hasty introduction resulted in insufficient understanding of the role and the functions of the Committee and the Commissions. Hence, majority of the respondents claimed that the role of the Commissions is to intervene in case of occurrence of interethnic incidents, leaving aside Committee's mandate dedicated to continuity of nurturing and advancing the relations between members of different ethnic communities.

The results of the research also indicate that political factors have crucial influence on the work of the Committee and the Commissions. Beyond any doubt, the will and the interests of the major political parties on the political scene determine the pace and the outcomes from the work of the Committee and the Commissions. The influence of political parties is noticeable on multiple levels. Pertaining to the Committee for Interethnic Relations the results of the research clearly indicated that the improvement of the legal framework for the work of the Committee didn't prevent the widespread use of boycotting the sessions of the Committee every time when the working agenda of the Committee would go against the political interests

of the political party in question. The reply of the first President of the Committee (when asked why the Committee didn't react in relation to some serious interethnic incidents), that the Committee is working in accordance with its annual working plan, gives additional proof on the approach of avoiding the issues every time they are in contradiction with the actual party agendas. Concerning the Commissions for Interethnic Relations, the results indicate that the legal frameworks that define the activity of the Commissions, compared to the legal framework of the Committee, is much loose and prone to different interpretations. Major means for establishing control over the work of the Commissions is through the process of nominating the members. As indicated, majority from the members of the Commissions are in the same time members of the Municipal Councils as representatives of certain political party, and even though in many Commissions there are certain members who come outside of the Municipal Council and do not have any political affiliation, political parties always take care to control sufficient number of members that will allow them control the voting and decision making processes.

The influence of politics and political parties in the work of Committee and Commissions is also visible by analyzing the outcomes from the work of the Committee and the Commissions. Almost all decisions made by the Committee are strictly declarative in nature. Even in some situations where the Committee, in his decisions, has required certain actions to be taken by the Government or the Parliament, Committee's decisions have been ignored and there was no pressure from the President or Committee's members in regard to the implementation of its decisions. Results reveal that Commissions were having similar practice of issuing press releases on condemning interethnic incidents but without taking any further steps for addressing the situation.

Looking at the results from the research the author could not refrain from questioning the overall intentions and attitude of the authorities toward the work and the outcomes of the work of the Committee and the Commissions. Most of the Commissions don't have their own budgets or any financial means for organization and support of their work. In addition many of them are facing elementary problems, like the lack of meeting space or absence of administrative and technical support from the respective municipality (no computers, no printers). If we add, on top of this, that members of the Commissions do not get any financial reimbursement for their work, the logical question that follows is: what are the expectations of the authorities regarding the work and the outcomes from the work

of the Commissions? The author Andries Odendaal is positively evaluating the Peace Committees in South Africa, whose activity was supported by allocation of budgets was supported with allocation of budgets and administrative support from professionals employed in state's administration (Odendaal, 2010, p. 12). In a similar manner, authors Bawumia and Ojielo noticed that Local Peace Committees in Ghana have their own budgets and enjoy administrative and technical support from the Government (Bawumia & Ojielo, 2007, pp. 7-8).

The situation in Macedonia is totally opposite compared to the status of the Peace Committees in Ghana and South Africa. The activity of the Peace Committees in these two countries shows that Commissions for Interethnic Relations must receive all the necessary financial and structural support if we are expecting them to produce serious political effects. The same logic is applicable regarding the work of the Committee for Interethnic Relations. In situations where there is no follow up, and nobody bears responsibility for not implementing the decisions of the Committee, the credibility and the impact of its work is highly questionable.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The conclusion of the author, based on the findings, is that both the Committee and the Commissions for Interethnic relations have insignificant role in addressing and advancing the relations between ethnic communities in Republic of Macedonia.

The overall impression is that the issues of significance for the interethnic relations are most commonly addressed by the political elites on central and local level, and that both the Committee and the Commissions did not demonstrate capacity to manage situations which challenged the interethnic relations.

Author's major recommendation for the future work of the Committee and the Commissions for Interethnic relations is that the influence of the political parties over the work of the Committee and the Commissions should be removed. The existing practice has proven that neither MPs nor Municipal Councilors can manage to distance themselves from their party identities and make decisions, solely as representatives of the citizens from respective ethnic communities.

On the contrary, both MPs and Municipal Councilors (who are at the same time members of the Commissions) always give precedence to protecting the interests of the political parties, and this manner of conduct is devastating to the integrity and

the credibility of the Committee and the Commissions. Members of the Committee and the Commissions should be recruited from people with no party affiliation, well known and respected within their communities.

Finally, the authorities need to follow the examples of successful functioning of Peace Committees from South Africa and Ghana and begin with setting up the necessary administrative support, allowing members of the Commissions to fulfill their duties with assistance of professionals from state's administration. In addition the authorities must provide a budget for securing the regular functioning of the Commissions.

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