



**Republic of Macedonia  
STATE ELECTION COMMISSION**

***PARTICIPATION OF MINORITIES IN THE ELECTION PROCESS OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA***

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I am extremely honored and satisfied for having this possibility to address this notable gathering on the topic that is very significant for the Republic of Macedonia, an issue which the Republic of Macedonia considers to be very important.

Today, the number of ethnic communities in the world is 22 times bigger than the number of internationally recognized countries. Each country should establish a system of protection of all the ethnic communities and institutional frame that will enable the ethnic communities to nurture and protect the national, ethnic, cultural, religious, and language identity on their territory. This is possibly only with their active inclusion in the social, economic and political life in the country where they live in.

As you all know, the Republic of Macedonia is multi-ethnic, multi-democratic state. The total number of the population in Republic of Macedonia, according to the national belonging expressed in the last census in 2002 is:

<i>Ethnic belonging</i>	<i>Number of citizens</i>	<i>%</i>
Macedonians	1.297.981	64,18
Albanians	509.083	25,17
Turks	77.959	3,85
Serbs	35.939	1,78
Vlachs	9.695	0,48
Bosniaks	17.018	0,84
Roma	53.879	2,66
Others	20.993	1,04
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.022.547</b>	<b>100</b>

This character of the country is founded in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia where the Preamble besides the Macedonians, includes, as constitutional peoples, part of the Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Serbs, Roma, Bosniaks and other people that live in the country. The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia gives a legal basis for promotion, reinforcement and improvement of the protection of the fundamental human rights and freedoms.

### ***Basic constitutional provisions that define the status of the ethnic communities in the election process***

The constitutional provision regarding the use of the language of the ethnic communities states the following: *"On the total territory of the Republic of Macedonia and its international relations, the official language will be the Macedonian and its Cyrillic alphabet. Another language, spoken by at least 20% of the citizens, will also be considered an official language, together with its alphabet, as determined by this law..."*

Pursuant to Article 9 of the Constitution *"The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are equal in their freedom and rights independently of the sex, race, skin color, national and social origin, political and religious beliefs, the property and social condition. All citizens are equal in accordance with the Constitution and the laws..."*

The right of freedom of affiliation respectively the right and freedom, no matter the race, color, sex, language, religion, political and other beliefs, national or social origin is given to all the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia to participate in the leading of the public issues directly or through elected representatives of free and democratic elections.

The right to suffrage is guaranteed by Constitution for all the citizens over the age of 18. It is equal, general and direct and it is accomplished in free elections with secret voting.

Each citizen has the right to participate in the execution of public functions.

### ***Basic legal provisions that define the participation of the ethnic communities in the election process***

The stated rights guaranteed by Constitution are more precisely determined in a line of legal solutions among which the Election Code. The provisions in the Election Code that define and determine the role of the ethnic communities in the election process in the Republic of Macedonia are the legal solutions referring to:

- the election model
- the representation of the people belonging to the ethnic communities in the election process, and

## ***Election model***

The election system is significant regarding the role of the ethnic communities in the election process. The representation of the ethnic communities in the legislative power depends mostly on the type of election system of voting. The election model should be appropriate to the real needs in the society and the social groups, as well as all the ethnic communities within.

Pursuant to the Election Code, the Republic of Macedonia when electing its members of the Parliament and councilors in the municipalities' councils, practices the proportionate model where the territory of the country is divided in 6 election units determined by law and in each of the election units 20 members of the Parliament are elected. The number of the voters in the election units can deviate by mostly 5% regarding the average number of voters per election unit.

Having in mind that the ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia are most often territorially inhabited, we have taken into consideration to provide the appropriate representation of the ethnic communities in the central and local government when marking and creating the election units and the municipalities. Respectively, this is a manner in which the voters have the possibility to elect candidates whom they find to be eligible to represent their needs, especially when speaking about the election of majors.

The proportionate election model, which, pursuant to the Election Code is practiced in the Republic of Macedonia, enables equal representation of the communities in the country. Thus, according to the results of the last parliamentary elections that took place last year, out of 123 members of the Parliament, 39 are representatives from the other ethnic communities, where 24 are Albanians, 4 Serbs, 3 Bosniaks, 3 Macedonian Muslims, 2 Turks, 2 Roma and one Vlach.

## ***Representation of the people from the ethnic communities in the election bodies***

The appropriate representation of the people from the ethnic communities in the composition of the election bodies has essential meaning when dealing with the transparency and trust in the election process. The credibility of the election process significantly depends on the inclusiveness and active participation of the representatives of the ethnic communities in the election bodies, especially where the voters are in direct contact with the representatives of the election administration.

The ethnic communities in the election processes in the Republic of Macedonia are included in all the levels of election administration, from the State Election Committee,

the municipality election committees and the election boards, pursuant to the legally determined principle in the appropriate equal representation.

Thus, according to the detailed legal provisions and the bylaws, adopted by the State Election Committee in the Republic of Macedonia, the election of the members of the election boards is performed randomly from the line of people of the state and public administration according to the last census of the population in the following manner:

- in the municipalities where 20% do 50% of the citizens of other communities live, in the composition in the election boards in the respective municipality one representative of the respective ethnic community is elected;
- in the municipalities where 50% to 70% of the citizens of other communities live, in the composition of the election boards in the respective municipality two representatives of the respective ethnic community are elected, and
- in the municipalities where 70% and more citizens of other communities live, in the composition of the election boards in the respective municipality three representatives of the respective ethnic community are elected.

### ***The use of languages of the ethnic communities in the election process***

The use of languages of the ethnic communities is also very important element when the transparency and the trust in the election process are taken into consideration.

In the Republic of Macedonia this issue is positioned on the level of right guaranteed with the Constitution. Pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, the official language is the Macedonian which is used in the territory of the whole country and in the international relations, while the language that is used by at least 20% of the citizens, is also, together with the Macedonian language, an official language in the state bodies of official communication and it can also be used in the Republic of Macedonia. In praxis, that is the language of the Albanian ethnic community.

Besides the above stated, any other language used by at least 20% of the citizens in the units of the local self-government is officially in use in the respective municipalities. The total official communication between the citizens and the municipality administration can be ongoing in Macedonian and the other respective language. In some municipalities at the moment, in praxis, these are the Albanian, Turkish, Serbian and Roma language.

Pursuant to the stated Constitution frame, the representatives of the ethnic communities have the right during the overall election process, as well as for all the others legally determined election activities, to use their own language, depending on their representation at the territory of the election unit respectively the municipality. Furthermore, for these election units and municipalities the overall election material for

these municipalities besides into Macedonian and the language of the respective ethnic community is also printed in the language of the 20% of the citizens that speak language different than the Macedonian.

In praxis, out of total 6 election units, in 4 of them the election material is bilingual (Macedonian and Albanian) and out of 84 municipalities, 30 are bilingual (26 Macedonian-Albanian, 4 Macedonian-Turkish) and two municipalities are trilingual (one Macedonian-Albanian-Serbian and one Macedonian-Albanian-Roma).

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In general, the right to political participation and pursuant to the international standards for human rights is a very significant element of the protection of the rights of the ethnic communities, as well as for keeping their different cultural identity to which attention should be paid continuously throughout the social living via the appropriate institutions of the state.

Thank you for your attention.

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