

# OSCE Monitoring Mission in Skopje (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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[Commentator] As in 2001, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was sliding toward a civil war that could have spread beyond its borders. This was Aracinovo, near the border with Kosovo; ethnic Albanians from within and outside of the country fighting government and other ethnic Macedonian forces. This was why the OSCE was here; the risk of other Balkan conflicts spilling over. It mobilised dozens more border observers and set about trying in a dozen ways to reduce tensions and shore up stability. By early 2002, a handful of international staff had swelled to more than 300. It worked. Life in Aracinovo today is far from ideal but it's going in the right direction.

Police Chief, Ismet Ismaili, credits OSCE training.

[Ismet Ismaili] It is normal that there was dissatisfaction or distrust toward the police. We found the way; we were the first link in the chain. We found the way to become closer to the population.

[Commentator] Aracinovo policeman, Vlado Angelikov, ethnic Macedonian and his ethnic Albanian partner, Idris Yahiya, now face little more serious than illegal woodcutting. Ethnic Albanians are a majority here but a minority in the country as a whole. So a bi ethnic show of 'good cop, good cop' reassures both ethnic groups that the law is there to protect them.

Stoinika Tzvetanova, ethnic Macedonian, lives alone, but her daughter doesn't worry.

[Vesna Nikolova] Maybe before I would have been scared but now I am not. I know that the police, whether Macedonian or Albanian, will keep peace and order in the village.

[Commentator] Zero tolerance is not the watchword here.

[Ismet Ismaili] We would like to tell all the people of Macedonia that if we policemen can work and live together, they can too.

[Commentator] The OSCE's democratic policing campaign has invested more than two million euros to draw more minority recruits to a modernised police academy and to whip the police force into shape for the future.

[Josh Court] With Macedonia looking to join NATO and EU, and from a security point of view, it's essential that we keep the population happy and make sure that they have proper policing by our standards.

[Commentator] To connect police and public, this OSCE sponsored effort has held open days for children, organised bicycle races, even a tango contest.

Building trust in another way, here in the mountainous north west of the Republic, where most people are ethnic Albanians, is a hotbed of reconciliation between traditionally contentious ethnic groups. South East Europe University, launched in 2001 by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities with donations from the US and the European Union. It counters extremism by showing ethnic minorities that there is another way. Ethnic Albanians, a quarter of the population, are mostly Muslim, but most of them are far from radical. SEEU gives them a chance for a first class higher education in their own language, but teaching here is also in Macedonian and English and one student in five is ethnic Macedonian or from another minority. This lecture on the European identity is close to the heart of what SEEU is all about.

Jasmina Mirtoska, on the left, is an ethnic Macedonian studying English; on the right, Computer Science major, Vlora Ademi, ethnic Albanian. So does multi ethnic education work?

[Jasmina Mirtoska] It functions, it really functions, it really works and that's amazing. And I can talk Macedonian, English, even Albanian. I am accepted. Whichever language I speak, people treat me the same way.

[Commentator] Could this country have done it without a push from the OSCE?

[Vlora Ademi] I think that both of them are required. If this idea starts from Macedonian people, this University would not be established. If this University starts from foreign, they will not have succeeded. So both of them mixed, they have succeeded.