



Република Македонија

**NATIONAL STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
FOR THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS**



ALLIANCE of CIVILIZATIONS

The National Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia for the Attainment of the Objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations sets a general framework of activities related to intercultural dialogue. It defines the basic framework of on-going and future planned projects and activities in the area of education, youth, media and migration.

The main agencies implementing the projects are the ministries- Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of the Interior, the Secretariat General of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the Secretariat for European Affairs, the Secretariat for the Implementation of the Framework Agreement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Agency of Youth and Sports, the Commission for Relations among Religious Communities and Religious Groups and the Broadcasting Council of the Republic of Macedonia.

The activities and projects under the National Strategy will be implemented at the national, regional and global level.

I. Alliance of Civilizations

The Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) was established in 2005, upon the initiative of Spain and Turkey, under UN auspices. Its objective is to develop an agenda of good-governance of cultural diversity at the global and local level, to improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions, and thus counter divisions, polarization and extremism in and among societies.

In this respect, the UN Secretary General Cofi Annan established a High Level Group of 20 renowned personalities entrusted with the task of examining the roots of polarization of societies and cultures. In 2006, the Group prepared practical recommendations and defined the following objectives: develop a network of partnerships with States, develop and support projects that promote understanding and reconciliation among cultures globally and, in particular, between Muslim and Western societies, and establish relations and facilitate dialogue among groups that can act as a force of moderation and understanding during times of heightened cross-cultural tensions.

In April 2007, the Republic of Macedonia became a member of the “Group of Friends” of the Alliance of Civilizations with a view to contributing to bridging the cultural gap between countries and encouraging intercultural dialogue among nations.

In April 2007, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon appointed the former President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, as the High Representative for the AoC to lead the implementation phase of the Alliance. This marked the beginning of the second stage of the process consisting of design of action oriented AoC national implementation plans centered on initiatives and projects focused on the four main priority areas of action: youth, media, education and migrations.

Thus far there have been two Alliance forums held – in Madrid in 2008 and in Istanbul in 2009. The Madrid Forum is considered to be a turning point in the work of the AoC: dialogue, debates, launching practical initiatives and commitments to actions focused on advancing the relations among religions and cultures.

The framework of international organization with which the AoC has concluded formal arrangements of cooperation has been continually expanding as of the AoC establishment (UNESCO, ALESCO, Council of Europe, EU, Organization of the Islamic Conference, OSCE, etc). The Alliance has thus far established links and cooperates with 16 universities and research centres.

According to the last figures there are more than 103 members- Groups of Friends of the Alliance, countries or international organizations.

In December 2009, in Sarajevo, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South East European AoC countries adopted the AOC's first Regional Strategy on Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation in South Eastern Europe. Thus, the AoC has started the practical implementation of its global objectives in the regional setting. In this regard, there are preparations underway for the adoption of strategies, as well as strategies for the Mediterranean and for the region of South America.

II. Objectives of the National Strategy

Following the main areas of activities of the Alliance of Civilizations- education, youth, media and migrations, the main objectives of the National Strategy are:

- Support to the AoC objectives for implementation of activities for development of a cohesive society of mutual understanding;
- Promotion of mutual understanding and respect for diversity;
- Advancement of civic values and culture of peace;
- Improvement of integration and capabilities of immigrants, with special focus on the youth;
- Establishment of support to bilateral and regional cooperation in the implementation of AoC projects with neighbouring countries;
- Promotion and dissemination of AoC initiatives at the national and regional level;
- Encouraging the youth to participate in learning about the cultural values of other ethnic communities in Macedonia;
- Expanding the possibilities for personal understanding, advancement and appreciation for the national, European and world cultural and spiritual heritage;
- Encouraging bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the area of inter-cultural dialogue among the young;
- Improving the process of inter-cultural study in the education process;
- Contribution to the promotion and dissemination of AoC initiatives relating to the young at the national and regional level;
- Contribution of global media in promoting peace, security and enhancing mutual religious tolerance;
- Encouraging bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the area of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue and implementation of projects of common interests among nations;
- Improvement of the process of introducing religious education in the education processes;
- Contribution to the promotion and dissemination of the AoC initiatives for dialogue among nations belonging to different cultures and religions;

- Raising the awareness among people through the media (as of earliest age onwards) about dialogue among cultures and diversity;
- Recognition of and overcoming inter-religious tensions;
- Informing the public about different cultures and religions;
- Analysis of migration movements and recognition of their benefits;
- Efficient and transparent management of legal migration in line with the national development, especially the economic growth and demographic development;
- Respect for human rights, in compliance with the national and international law and concluded agreements in the area of forced migration;
- Clear and effective procedures aimed at prevention of illegal border crossings, cross-border crime, trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling.

III. Education

State of Play in the Area of Education

In the context of implementing the commitments of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to consistent respect for human rights and raising the quality of inter-ethnic relations, the Ministry of Education and Science pursues many of its activities with a focus on promotion of multiculturalism, strengthening inter-ethnic and cultural cooperation, tolerance, peace and coexistence.

The legislative provisions promote the principles of democracy, non-discrimination, respect for individual differences among pupils/students, multiculturalism, international compatibility of knowledge.

The curricula for primary and secondary education, i.e. the curricula for the subjects of history, geography, civil education, and introduction to religions (the instruction under this subject enables children to learn about the values of the largest world religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam and about the character of religion, as of its beginnings and its significance for humanity in general), classical culture in European civilization, sociology, ethics, introduction to law, as well as project activities in the area of culture of protection, peace and tolerance, provide instruction which facilitates adoption of universal moral and civilization values and contribute towards developing young people having rich general culture, and they enable learning about the history, geography and cultural features of different peoples and civilization, being conceptualized in the spirit of modern civilization values- democracy, justice, tolerance and humanness. Extracurricular activities are essentially centred on practicing and promoting general human values.

The mission of higher education is advancement and promotion of national and regional, international and historical cultures in the context of cultural pluralism and diversity; fostering the traditional features and values of all communities in the Republic of Macedonia, promoting them at the international level as a shared cultural treasure; fostering multiculturalism and multilingualism; and advancement of social values by training the youth in the values and ethics that constitute the basis of a democratic society.

For the purpose of separating education from politics and political events in society, then continuous advancement of the education process by applying the principles of interethnic

and cultural tolerance, as well as for the purpose of promoting dialogue as a means of peaceful settlement of conflicts, complete depoliticization of education and diffusion of certain interethnic tensions among pupils, parents, teachers and other social factors, in 2009 the non-governmental organizations working in the area of education and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a Declaration on Depoliticization of Education, Interethnic Tolerance and Non-Violent Communication.

Major Challenges

Fostering the role of education in teaching about diversity, appreciation of and respect for diversity; extending the knowledge about other cultures; developing programs under which certain subjects (such as physical education, civics, foreign language, computers, art) will be taught in ethnically diverse groups; ensuring opportunities for children who go to school in ethnically homogenous settings to interact with their peers from different ethnic and linguistic background; promoting interaction by teaching languages, multicultural education and joint activities.

Managing cultural diversity at the national level

Examples of good practices:

- Forming inter-ministerial management groups and/or relevant regional structures;
- Inclusion of local authorities in national strategies;
- Developing a platform/forum of civil society and other stakeholders.

Tasks, activities and timeframe

The priority goals for the following 3 years are as follows:

- Promoting integration through the education system and language learning: Creating an integrated strategy for an inclusive education system. Integration policies aimed at better reflection of interethnic reality in the education system will contribute significantly to a more coherent society and will help bridge ethnic borders.
- Further active participation in implementing the National Roma Strategy, deriving from the 2005-2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion.
- The Adult Education Centre, which will work on creating opportunities for adult education in the forthcoming period, thus promoting the concept of lifelong learning as one of the basis of the EU Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020, was established in July 2009.
- Under the TEMPUS and CEEPUS programs there is regular exchange of students and teachers, an activity which will be carried out intensively in the coming period.
- The Youth in Action Program, which is under the competences of the National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility, will carry out projects, through individual activities that will enable Macedonia's youth to develop active cooperation with the youth from other EU countries, exchange experiences, good practices, learn foreign languages, build successful partnerships and increase mobility.
- The Republic of Macedonia participates in the Europe for Citizens Program, with the Ministry of Education and Science being the responsible body for coordination at the national

level. This program, which will be carried out in the next three years, includes 4 activities aimed at bringing closer people from the local communities throughout Europe for the purpose of exchanging experiences, opinions and values, learning from history and building the future; stimulating activities, debates and discussions related to European society and democracy, shared values, common history and culture through cooperation with civic organizations at the European level; encouraging cooperation among citizens and civic organizations from all participating countries, which will contribute to intercultural dialogue and promote European diversity and equality.

- The Ministry has provided support for the UNPD project Strengthening Interethnic Dialogue and Cooperation in the Republic of Macedonia, which will be implemented from 2009 to 2012 and consists of three major components: 1. Strengthening national systems and capacities at the local level for transformation of conflicts; 2. Strengthening the capacities of the national education system for promoting and strengthening cultural diversity; 3. Raising public awareness about the sensitivity of intercultural relations.

- In compliance with the Strategy for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Sector and the Implementation Action Plan (2007–2011), in 2008 the Ministry of Education and Science pursued intensive cooperation with the civil sector. The projects aimed at promotion of democracy and civil society, advancement of human rights, advancement of education of the communities in the Republic of Macedonia, continuing education abroad, organizing educational study visits, which have been approved by the Ministry, include:

- My First Vote; Youth Education Forum – licensed implementer of the Debate Program by the International Debate Education Association (IDEA) (the debate program has different debate formats for secondary education pupils, students, professors, and one of the topics covered is Culture of Dialogue);

- Winter and Summer International University organized by the Academic Training Association (ATA), a non-governmental organization from the Netherlands;

- The Youth in Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings through Activities in the Education in Macedonia and Albania;

- Use of Religious Symbols in Secondary Schools and Their Influence on the Relations among Students and between Students and Professors, a project carried out by the Youth Group of the Helsinki Committee;

- Higher Level, a project carried out by the AIESEC student organization and aimed at promoting and respecting cultural diversity as a basis for joint activities and coexistence.

- Strengthening extracurricular activities aimed at practicing and promoting common human values. The Ministry of Education and Science supports the initiatives in the formal and informal sector that are aimed at acquiring and application of civil skills, especially in respect of sport and cultural activities, which encourage social cohesion and bonding. The following are ongoing project that will be supported in the future:

- Building Democratic Schools – Learning and Living in Peace;

- Interethnic Communication and Cooperation among Pupils in Ethnically Mixed Primary Schools in the Republic of Macedonia;

- Friendship through Interethnic Cooperation;

- Multicultural Clubs.

- Introduction of the subject Ethics of Religions in primary education in the 2010/2011 school year

- Organizing 10 debates at 10 secondary schools in the Republic of Macedonia that have a mixed composition of pupils of different ethnic background (2010/2011).

- Organizing one-day forums focused on the challenges in the education of persons belonging to the communities in the Republic of Macedonia (2010/2011).
- Organizing a Conference on Education of the Communities in the Republic of Macedonia, in which representatives of state institutions, national and foreign foundations and citizens' associations, as well other relevant factors in education will participate.

IV. The Youth

State of Play at the National Level

Inter-cultural dialogue represents an open exchange of views between individuals and groups of different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect at the local, regional and national levels. The increased cooperation of the youth and youth organizations at the national and international levels requires advancement of the process of learning about different cultures that the youth meet. Although there are numerous organizations that promote intercultural learning, there is evident need for greater inclusion of the youth from different cultures at the national and local levels. This strategy will be of great interest to the youth as it aims to accommodate their specific needs in terms of promoting intercultural dialogue and cooperation with the Government, i.e. the relevant institutions involved in the implementation of this strategy.

Strategic Perspective

Bridging the cultural gap between different countries, as well as encouraging inter-cultural dialogue between the young people in the Republic of Macedonia. Strengthening the capacities of the young people as the future carriers of changes in society through the implementation of the National Youth Strategy and the Action Plan, which also encompass inter-cultural dialogue as a category promoting cultural values in a society in the context of understanding and respecting other cultures and cultural differences.

Major Challenges

In a period of enhanced international communication which is intercultural by its nature, there is a tendency of using concepts which are to be understood in the same manner by the communities having their roots in the great variety of different histories and cultural contexts throughout the entire world. At the same time, this reality is marked by the challenge of efforts to understand the cultural specifics due to the fact that we are living in period of enhanced globalisation which also implies an enhancement of the communication between people from different cultures. The challenges facing the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue are related to the following aspects:

- The fight against discrimination, xenophobia, racism, as well as intolerance, as some of the prevailing challenges in the improvement of youth dialogue;
- Raising the youth's awareness about the importance and the benefits of learning about different cultures;
- The integration of inter-cultural learning into formal education as a manner of improving the study and the introduction to different cultures;

- Improving the access of the civil sector in Macedonia to the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue;
- Establishing institutional mechanisms at the local level aimed at the improvement of inter-cultural dialogue;
- Improving the youth's capacities for domestic and international mobility.

Managing Cultural Diversity at the National Level

As part of the implementation of this Strategy and the promotion of the objectives of the Alliance of Civilisations, in the context of youth issues, the Agency of Youth and Sports is to establish a structure (co-management body) for managing and coordinating cultural diversity at the national level. This involves the inclusion of all stakeholders dealing with the issue of interculturalism in their work, such as various ministries, the National Committee, relevant non-governmental organizations working with youth issues and other institutions. The actions of this coordinative body will be aimed at improving the programs of the Agency of Youth and Sports which concern the harmonization of the AoC objectives with the National Strategy for Youth Dialogue. Disseminating local initiatives for organizing inter-cultural events will also be part of the activities of the coordinative body.

Tasks, Activities and Timeframe

The priority activities for the effectuation of the objectives of the Strategy' in the next two years are the following:

- Developing programs for promoting cultural diversity at the local level;
- Implementing specific activities under the National Action Plan for the Youth Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia promoting inter-cultural dialogue;
- Organizing international youth exchanges;
- Organizing summer camps for young people from a number of countries working on topics related to human rights and inter-cultural dialogue;
- Training courses and seminars for young Roma;
- Cooperating with the UN Offices in the Republic of Macedonia for the purpose of improving the status of marginalized youth;
- Encouraging the civil sector for increasing the participation in the youth mobility programs of the European Union;
- Creating local youth strategies which also include the aspect of inter-cultural dialogue;
- Organizing a Regional Gathering of Young People from Southeast Europe, planned as a regional process aimed at increasing youth participation in the political and democratic processes of the countries in the Region.

Communication Strategy

For the purpose of better introducing the National Strategy to the target groups (young people) through an adequate process, it is necessary to design a specific communication strategy in which the messages aimed at the target groups will be precisely defined, as well as the proper mechanisms, instruments, time and channels for communicating with the general public and target groups will also be precisely designed. Furthermore, the Communication Strategy will also help identify the resources required for establishing an active communication with the public, for management, providing a relevant framework for

measuring the progress and success, as well as the efficiency evaluation of the conducted activities envisaged under the Communication Strategy. The potential problems possibly occurring during the communication with the specific target groups, as well as the models of handling problems together with the instruments for resolving them will be also be set forth in the Strategy.

The following activities will be conducted under the Communication Strategy:

- Linking the web site of the Alliance of Civilisations to the web sites of the ministries and government agencies of the Republic of Macedonia;
- Posting the National Strategy for Dialogue between Cultures on the web site of the AoC in the Macedonian, Albanian and English languages;
- Organizing a National Press Conference for the purpose of presenting the National Strategy;
- Organizing local events promoting the National Strategy;
- Offering sporadic media coverage informing the public on the conducted activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

For the purpose of successfully implementing this Strategy, the Agency of Youth and Sports will establish a *Commission on the Monitoring and Evaluation of the National Strategy* which is to inspect and monitor the set indicators. The Commission will be composed of representatives of the relevant ministries, institutions and national youth organizations, by observing the principle of equitable representation. The Monitoring and Evaluation Commission will monitor the activities of the Agency of Youth and Sports and the youth organizations participating in the implementation of the youth programs. It will also monitor the level of implementation of the projects of non-governmental organizations related to the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue. This also involves monitoring the projects approved by the Agency of Youth and Sports aimed at the implementation of the *National Strategy*. The Commission will also monitor the coordinative body managing the planned and conducted activities and issue instructions on the improvement of the ongoing and planned activities and programs.

V. Media

The role of the media in the implementation of the National Strategy for Dialogue among Cultures

- Designing media campaigns for raising the awareness of the people (of all ages, starting from the youngest generations) about the importance of the participation in the dialogue between cultures;
- Producing promotional videos on the introduction to other cultures and diversities, as well as the improvement of minority integration and the fight against xenophobia, racism and intolerance, which will be aired on all televisions in the Republic of Macedonia as part of their program schemes;
- Designing projects aimed at the implementation of the Strategy for Dialogue among Cultures;

- Designing projects aimed at raising the awareness among children and youth about the importance of the dialogue among cultures;
- Designing projects aimed at raising the awareness among adults about the importance of the dialogue among cultures and respecting diversity;
- The projects are to be aired by all televisions in the Republic of Macedonia and they are to include the introduction to other cultures and diversities, the improvement of the integration of minorities and the fight against xenophobia, racism and intolerance;
- Broadcasting of already created programs of public interest, financed by the license fee, through the Broadcasting Council of the Republic of Macedonia, which address, in certain aspects, topics relating to the National Strategy on Dialogue among Cultures.

VI. Migration

The Republic of Macedonia is committed to efficient migration processes management and pursues active and consistent migration policy, featured with a due care for the national, social, economic, and cultural development of the country. This policy is based on principles of respect for and protection of human rights and freedoms, solidarity, long-term macroeconomic benefits and historical responsibility. Endeavouring to taking advantage of benefits of legal migration movements, and aiming at expanding free economic initiative and free circulation of capital, pursuing its policy of legal and free migration, the Republic of Macedonia intends to create prerequisites for reduction of the intensity of migration and to utilize its great development potentials by promoting efficient system of issuance of work permits and by maintaining a transparent framework for acquiring Macedonian nationality. In this context, foreigners staying in the country are guaranteed fundamental human rights and freedoms, and are given the opportunity to temporarily or permanently reside in the country and be integrated into the Macedonian society, including the right to seek asylum.

The main goal of the migration policy of the Republic of Macedonia is to create a comprehensive and consistent approach for efficient migration processes management in the field of legal, forced, and illegal international migration. Given the scope, pace, and types of migration movements, as well as complexity of migration in context of its cause-and-effect relation to socioeconomic and demographic development, the migration policy of the Republic of Macedonia aims at creating a unified approach in this field.

Measures and activities are foreseen focused on the attainment of the goals of the migration policy of the Republic of Macedonia, which on their part will enable efficient and coordinated implementation of the policy.

The following activities and/or measures are foreseen in the field of visa regime:

- Further harmonization of the visa issuance procedures and of the legislation with the *acquis communautaire* in the field of visa regime;
- Continual enhancement of the institutional capacity in the field of visa regime;
- Further promotion of the national visa IT system.

The following activities and/or measures are foreseen in the field of stay and employment of foreigners and their integration:

- Monitoring and harmonization of national legislation in the field of stay, employment, and integration of foreigners with the legislation of the European Union;

- Establishment and development of a new central database on foreigners covering asylum, migration, and visas (software and hardware);
- Continual promotion of procedures for employment of foreigners;
- Upgrading the procedure for determination of the status of stateless persons;
- Further institutional capacity building in the field of stay, employment and integration of foreigners, as well as running continual training on human resources;

The following activities and/or measures are foreseen in the field of asylum:

- Monitoring and harmonization of the national legislation in accordance with changes in the field of asylum under the legislation of the European Union;
- Continual advancement of the procedure for issuance of identification documents to persons seeking protection from the Republic of Macedonia;
- The Government of the Republic of Macedonia is to establish a List of Safe Countries of Origin;
- Further capacity building in the field of asylum.

The following activities and/or measures are foreseen in the field of integration of foreigners:

- The Centre for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners in the Republic of Macedonia has been established and has started its work, for purposes of more efficient implementation of the integration activities.
- Programs intended to stimulate dialogue between immigrants and domicile population, in order to overcome problems of xenophobia and discrimination;
- Projects on sustainable development for refugees have been started.

The following activities and/or measures are foreseen in the field of illegal migration:

- Continual staff training and capacity building of the Ministry of the Interior in the field of border policing;
- Further technical and software equipping of institutions involved in integrated border management;
- Implementation of the instrument of 'Risk Analysis' in the field of illegal migration;
- Expanding international cooperation in the field of information exchange and participation in regional systems of early warning;
- Concluding re-admission agreements with countries with which such agreements have not been signed yet.

The Republic of Macedonia will pursue a modern migration policy, regulating immigration in accordance with its national development strategy, in such manner that it will:

- Adjust immigration with the necessary inflow of work capable and active population;
- Establish annual quotas for employment of foreigners in accordance with needs of the labour market;
- Stimulate return of emigrants and nationals of the Republic of Macedonia residing abroad;
- Facilitate settlement of family members of Macedonia nationals;
- Efficient fight against illegal migration, mostly by further promotion of the system of integrated border management;
- Provide continual enhancement of institutional capacities and human resources in competent institutions in the field of migration.

VII. Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups

The Republic of Macedonia represents a unique mosaic of diversities, mosaic of multiethnicity, multiculturalism, and multiconfessionalism. This diversity is our great advantage and a challenge to further upgrade of these processes.

Major issues to be addressed by the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups

- Role of religion and traditional values for a healthy and prosperous society;
- Fostering religious and cultural diversities in education and influence by different religions at regional and local level;
- Ethics of Religions in primary education as prerequisite for mutual respect and high level of tolerance, as the greatest civilization contribution;
- Visiting religious sites and buildings before the introduction of the subject Ethics of Religions, as part of the process building the capacity for mutual respect and common appreciation of such religious sites and buildings (churches, mosques, cathedrals, synagogues).
- Role of religion and culture and their contribution in enhancing mutual trust and respect;
- Combating discrimination, xenophobia, racism and intolerance as one of the most essential challenges to improving dialogue among young people of diverse culture and religious affiliation;
- Improving the civil sector's access in Macedonia to promoting intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

1. Management of Cultural Diversity at the National Level

As part of implementing this Strategy and in the context of the promotion of the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations, it is necessary to establish management and coordination of culture and religious diversity at the national level. This implies involvement of all stakeholders that address intercultural and inter-religious segment as part of their activities, such as various ministries, the National Commission, churches, and religious communities, NGOs, engaged on promoting a dialogue among various cultures and religions. This Coordinative Body will work towards improving national programs in order to harmonize the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations and the National Strategy on Dialogue among Cultures.

In addition, the Coordinative Body will also work on increasing the number of local initiatives for inter-cultural events.

2. Goals, activities and timeframe of the activities of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups

The priority activities for the attainment of the objectives of this Strategy, to be implemented in the following two years are:

1. Organization of the Second World Conference on Inter-Religious and Inter-Civilization Dialogue: "Religion and Culture – Unbreakable Chain among Nations", held in Ohrid, 6-9 May 2010.
1. Organization of seminars and workshops for young believers from different religious communities in the Republic of Macedonia for purposes of their getting to know each other better.
2. Compulsory visit to the religious monuments in the Republic of Macedonia (churches, mosques, synagogues, etc.) for all elementary school pupils that attend the subject - Ethics of Religion.
3. Introducing ethics of the religion in primary education in the Republic of Macedonia.
4. Organization of the seminar 'Religion and the Media' for greater representation of the religions in the electronic and printed media in order to break down the barriers among different religions and their mutual rapprochement.
5. Signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the Association of local self-government bodies – ZELS and the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups for a better implementation of the Law on the Legal Status of a Church, Religious Community and a Religious Group.
6. Preparation and promotion of a Religious Almanac to include information about all churches, religious communities and religious groups that exist and are active in the Republic of Macedonia.

VIII. The Ministry of Culture closely monitors and is actively involved in the programs and activities of UN, UNESCO and of the Alliance of Civilizations, especially in projects and initiatives that provide strong support to global efforts for promotion and affirmation of various cultural values, especially of the cultural heritage, and the readiness for dialogue and cooperation with all countries of South East Europe, European Union and wider.

The Ministry of Culture supports the projects that advance and promote cultural diversity and cultural dialogue. The Ministry sees the respect for different cultural expressions as an instrument for dialogue, mutual understanding and permanent development.

The Republic of Macedonia has ratified the all conventions of UNESCO in the area of protection of cultural heritage, including also the UNESCO Convention **on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**.

In addition to the traditional international events "Struga Poetry Evenings", "Ohrid Summer Festival", "Balkan Folklore Festival", "and Young Open Theatre" and others, several significant international events are also scheduled to be realized in the course of 2010 which help promote the intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, including the cultural values of the Republic of Macedonia. The major events under the rich program of activities are the following:

Organization of the Second World Conference on Inter-Religious and Inter-Civilization Dialogue "Religion and Culture – Unbreakable Chain among Nations" , on 6-9 May 2010 in Ohrid, in cooperation with the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups, as well as with financial and logistic support from UNESCO.

This Conference shall be organized as part of the UN *Decade of Dialogue among Civilizations* and the UNESCO *Decade for the Culture of Peace*, and as part of the 2010 – *International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures*, proclaimed by the UN.

The Second World Conference will mark three important jubilees: centennial of the birth of the world-famous humanist Mother Theresa, 1100 of the decease of St. Naum, and 1400 years of the proclamation of the Koran.

In the course of 2010, the Ministry of Culture will provide financial and logistic support to the long-term project of the Macedonian Section of the International PEN, to the poetic edition “Diversity” published in the Macedonian, English and in all other languages of the foreign poets that have contributed to this edition.

Within the framework of the 2010 Chairmanship the Republic of Macedonia of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, the Ministry of Culture will implement the :

- 1) Translation of the Council of Europe’s White Book on Inter-Cultural Dialogue from English into Macedonia, Albanian, Turkish and Roma.
 - 2) Organization of the Ministerial Conference, on 1-2 October 2010 on the theme “Marking the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada, 3 October 1985)” and Integrated protection as a development concept and its contribution to sustainable development of the cultural heritage in Europe.
- In addition to other competent ministries, the Ministry of Culture and the national Commission for UNESCO have also given their support to the UNDP Project “Improvement of the inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation among the communities in the Republic of Macedonia”, 2009- 2012.

The priority activities for the implementation of the goals of this program, to be financed under the Fund for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which was established in 2006 with a donation from the Spanish Government within the system of the United Nations, are:

1. Organization of the Second World Conference on Inter-Religious and Inter-Civilization Dialogue, Ohrid, on 6-9 May 2010;
2. Organization of two activities (seminars or workshops) for the young people of various ethnic and religious communities in the Republic of Macedonia in order to improve their social contacts. Before and after the Second World Conference the activities shall be realized through the existing UNESCO clubs, the networks of the “Associated schools of UNESCO”, and non-governmental sector.
3. Organization of seminars for the media in order to promote mutual contacts and cooperation among different ethnic communities, and to enable greater social contacts among them and accessibility of information to all.

In the course of 2009, the joint project “Sharing the tastes – a joint traditional cuisine of Turkey and Macedonia” was realized through the cooperation between the National

Commissions for UNESCO of Turkey and Macedonia. This project has been of special significance because it is the first project organized by two national commissions for UNESCO in the Region, in the area of protection of non-material cultural heritage.

The joint team, consisting of experts from the two countries, worked on this project by undertaking field research both in Macedonia and Turkey. As a second part of the project, a workshop was held in Skopje, on 17 November 2009, when the project coordinators presented the results and achievements of their research in the two countries. The presented results of the experts will be published in a special book in Turkey, in 2010, in Macedonian, Turkish and English, which will mark the completion of the project.

The project "Anthology of the European Folk Songs" was realized with the assistance of the UNESCO-BRESCE Regional Bureau. The publisher is "Matica Makedonska" from Skopje, and the author is Mr. Branko Karakas. This Anthology is a single volume edition in 5 languages (Macedonian, English, French, German and Russian). The songs were collected and selected with the assistance of the UNESCO National Commissions, the Ministry of Culture and Embassies of European countries. This project is part of the activities aimed at implementing the UNESCO Convention of protection of non-material cultural heritage, and promoting and protecting the diversity in the cultural expression. The launching ceremony is planned to take place in 2010, in Skopje and Vienna, within the framework of the "Days of the Macedonian Culture in Austria".

The marking of the Centennial of the birth of Mother Theresa (2010) and 50 years of the holding of the First International Manifestation "Struga Poetry Evenings" (2011) is part of the UNESCO activities to mark the jubilees of important events and personalities. These two jubilees incorporate the principles of promotion and affirmation of the inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue.