



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

**MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (FYROM)
NOVEMBER 17, 1996**

PRESS STATEMENT

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) co-ordinated international observation of the first round of the nation-wide municipal elections in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which took place on 17 November 1996. Sixty six international observers took part, who were drawn from 24 countries.

In the run up to the election the team met representatives of the Government, the state electoral organs and the political parties. Special mention has to be made of the way the State Electoral Commission was always ready to meet us and answer our many enquiries. A number of complaints were received directly from some of the parties, both in the run-up to the election and on the day itself, which were followed up and fully investigated. The observers were briefed and trained over 15 to 16 November, so that all would be familiar with the processes required and uniformly prepared. On election day 566 polling stations, spread throughout the country, were visited. Detailed questionnaires were completed for each polling station visit, the results of which were analysed by computer using Microsoft Excel software. The key question, representing the overall assessment at each polling station visit, was: "Did you feel the voting process was conducted properly"? It was answered thus:

Yes	-	89.0%	(504)
No	-	3.9%	(22)
No decision	-	7.1%	(40)

One of the most important factors to be taken into account in elections in emerging democracies is the presence in the polling stations of representatives of competing parties. The answers to the questionnaires given under the general title "Authorised parties present" were as follows:

governmental parties:	95.4%	present	(520)
	1.8%	not present	(10)
	2.8%	don't know	(15)
opposition parties	96.7%	present	(533)
	1.8%	not present	(10)
	1.3%	don't know	(7)

Few problems were raised relating to identification of voters or equipment present in polling stations.

Registration of voters was the problem most frequently identified. It is, however, an issue which is amongst the most difficult to analyse or quantify in election observation for the following reason: it is difficult to know if a voter who has not seen his name in one polling station will not find it elsewhere. Whilst a number of observers reported that some three, five or more potential voters had not found their names on the register at polling stations, others were told by party representatives that, for example, 10 to 20% of voters were not registered. Such statement cannot, of course, be scientifically precise. Presidents of Local Electoral Boards on a large number of occasions acknowledged that there were deficiencies in the register whilst reporting much lower and more plausible estimates of discrepancies.

The information gathered and the friendly contacts we have had throughout, at all levels of the local elections, give us an optimistic outlook on the development of the country's democratic future.

Skopje, 19 November 1996