

The OSCE Mission to Skopje - A Changing Field Mission in a Changing Environment¹

First Reactions to the Armed Conflict

Without a doubt, 2001 was the year in which the OSCE Mission in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) faced the greatest challenge in its almost ten year history. In certain respects, this was also a challenge for the Organization, which was under pressure to react quickly while not repeating the mistakes that had undeniably already been made in the region.

The armed conflict, which shook the very foundations of Macedonian society and the state in 2001, resulted in more intensive international engagement. At the outset, the OSCE reacted by pursuing two directions: co-ordination and personnel increases.

The Office of the President was the first to react diplomatically to the beginning of armed conflict between ethnic Albanians and the Macedonian security forces in the village of Tanusevci in the mountains north of the capital, Skopje, in February 2001. From this Office, an appeal was made to the representatives of the international community asking them to guarantee more intensive monitoring of the locations where fighting was going on. The OSCE Mission, which was one of the two missions on the spot, took on the job of co-ordinating this endeavour in close co-operation with the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and the UNHCR. Daily convoys, in which bilateral embassies represented in the country participated, were sent to the places where fighting was occurring.

This initial effort was to serve as a confidence-building measure. The international presence was to send a signal to the Macedonian government that aggression stemming from outside its territory (from Kosovo) would under no circumstances be accepted without a comment. At the same time, there were visits to border villages and the government began tentatively to implement long-delayed improvements to the highly rudimentary infrastructure in the border region. The goal of these joint efforts was to prevent the conflict from escalating. However, as was made visible a few weeks later, it was already too late for this.

On 4 March 2001, this measure was brought to a brutal end. A landmine allegedly laid by the so-called "National Liberation Army" (UCK/NLA²) killed

1 This article reflects the personal opinion of the author.

2 In Albanian, *Ushtria Çlirimtarë Kombëtarë*. This should not be confused with the Kosovo Liberation Army, *Ushtria Çlirimtarë e Kosovës*. It is highly probable that the similarity in the two names is no coincidence as the Macedonian UCK is meanwhile seen as the successor or sub-organization of the original Kosovar UCK.

two soldiers of the Macedonian army, the international convoy arrived at the scene of the incident a few minutes later. Efforts to save a severely injured soldier were unsuccessful, partially because the KFOR command structure was unable to provide a helicopter.

Because of the danger of other mine explosions, monitoring the fighting through a broad international presence was abandoned. At the same time, there were attempts on the diplomatic level to contain the conflict. From the beginning, the EU (in the form of the High Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana), NATO (through Secretary General Lord Robertson) and the US assumed the political leadership role. As had been the case in the Kosovo conflict, the OSCE was again elbowed into being the Organization with the role of executing operations. The OSCE Mission to Skopje saw itself confronted with the weaknesses in its mandate to that date and with a latent unfriendly stance taken within some of the Macedonian institutions,³ which limited the Mission's ability to take action in the field. Nevertheless, a permanent presence in the country was maintained, although Mission resources were taxed to the utmost degree.⁴ Nevertheless, the Mission considered it indispensable to report first-hand on the situation and to attempt to provide a correct picture of the conflict, which was being distorted by media coverage. It had also become clear that, at least in the beginning phase of the conflict, OSCE Mission reports contributed to the formation of opinions in the capitals of the participating States as well as in other places. When in the spring the government established a crisis group whose task it was to co-ordinate all activities related to the conflict, the OSCE Mission was also represented in this group. Today, the crisis group still acts as a co-ordinating body including the Mission and with its active co-operation.

Crisis Management and Its Limitations

In March 2001, the Permanent Council passed the decision to increase the size of the Mission.⁵ As a result of this, additional monitors were sent to Skopje. Apparently, passing this decision had not been easy, but it did smooth the path for further increases in personnel. Evidently, there were fears in some participating States that an overly large OSCE presence in the coun-

3 For example, the then Macedonian Foreign Minister Srgjan Kerim tried before and right after the outbreak of the conflict to have the OSCE Mission to Skopje closed. He argued initially that the Mission had fulfilled its mandate. Later, he declared in an interview on state television that the OSCE was "to blame for" the landmine incident on 4 March 2001 and thus sacrificed the lives of two Macedonian soldiers who were escorts to the convoy. In fact, it was by coincidence that the convoy arrived a few minutes later at the scene of the incident and OSCE Mission members as well as others made desperate attempts to save the life of one of the soldiers. Ultimately, neither the diplomatic steps nor the media campaign against the Mission were crowned by success.

4 At that point in time, the Mission consisted of eight international members.

5 Cf. OSCE, Permanent Council, Decision No. 405, Temporary Strengthening of the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, PC.DEC/405, 22 March 2001.

try might have negative effects on subjective perceptions of sovereignty. With this increase in personnel, the Mission was in any case roughly in a position to remain active within the framework of its mandate and cover the conflict area to a reasonable extent so that credible reports could be compiled. However, as the fighting continued, the limits of a civilian mission became all too clear. The primary goal of the OSCE in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was crisis prevention. In an armed conflict, however, the leeway to take action becomes greatly restricted. Nevertheless, by dealing with its mandate and tasks creatively, the Mission was able to carry out acute crisis prevention. However, the results of this were dependent on numerous factors. For example, the Mission was able to convince representatives of the government to visit the villages west of Kumanovo (north-east of the capital Skopje), which are primarily inhabited by Albanians, and to talk to the local population. The goal was to ensure that there was as little support as possible for the UCK/NLA. The means to this end were improvements in the local infrastructure as well as other areas where the inhabitants had put in requests, for example, in the health system. If these measures had been implemented before, there would have been considerably less conflict potential as the concerns of the people were actually very different from the goals verbalized by the UCK/NLA, and even more so from those aims left unsaid. Thus, however, many of these efforts were futile and only emphasized the lack of confidence of the population in the established Albanian parties.⁶

In individual cases, the Mission was able to mediate between the conflict parties. For example, it was this kind of mediation that led to the restoration of the water supply in the city of Kumanovo, which was interrupted during the course of the fighting due to a technical defect.

On the political level, the OSCE Mission tried to push ahead with reform in local administration. For a long time, the OSCE had seen this reform as one of the most important confidence-building measures. This is why the Mission had given the government, who had made this reform its cause, its full support on this project since 1998/1999. There had already been close co-operation with the ministries dealing primarily with this, i.e. the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Local Self-Government, before the crisis. The fact that reform of local government was laid down in the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 13 August 2001 is certainly attributable in part to OSCE efforts.

The appointment of Max van der Stoep, whose mandate as OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities ended on 30 June 2001, as the Personal Representative of the Romanian OSCE Chairmanship for Macedonia was unquestionably an important step in enhancing the OSCE's political profile and/

6 The government coalition formed in 1998 included the then largest Albanian party, the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA). The elections in September 2002 gave the former UCK/NLA leader Ali Ahmeti's party, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), the majority among ethnic Albanians and participation in the government coalition.

or remedying the damage that his predecessor had caused in this office.⁷ His participation in the Ohrid negotiations ensured that some of the topics important to the OSCE were dealt with and given consideration.

The Ceasefire and Transition to New Forms of Engagement

The ceasefire following the evacuation of the UCK/NLA fighters from Aracinovo, a village they had occupied,⁸ proved lasting although very fragile. Again, the task of the OSCE monitors changed according to the circumstances on location. The main activity during this period was to monitor whether the ceasefire was being maintained. This was not entirely possible, due, on the one hand, to the limited number of Mission members, and on the other, to the civilian profile of the Mission. However, it was necessary to bridge the gap in the period between Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski's request that NATO deploy a troop in the country to disarm the UCK/NLA and the actual deployment of this troop. On the other hand, the government expected the OSCE Mission to keep an exact account of violations of the ceasefire. The OSCE was in danger of becoming the object of the tensions within the crisis government, particularly as it had no mandate, let alone the power to prevent or even stop the territorial gains that the UCK/NLA had made in the area north of Tetovo in clear violation of the ceasefire. At the same time, ideas were being addressed publicly on how a new OSCE Mission should be structured in the situation after the crisis. The fact that these were discussed in public and without consulting the Mission (there was talk at the time of 500 monitors), awakened fears that a second KVM⁹ was in the making. These rumours led to further loss of acceptance on the part of the ethnic Macedonian population that culminated in an arson attack on the fleet of OSCE vehicles, also incidentally destroying a number of UN vehicles.

7 The American Robert Frowick had failed in this endeavour before because he did not coordinate his political moves adequately with all sides; his mediation mission had to be interrupted. On this see also Alice Ackermann, *On the Razor's Edge: Macedonia Ten Years after Independence*, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (Ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2001, Baden-Baden 2002*, pp. 117-135, in particular p. 131.

8 In June 2001, a UCK/NLA elite troop had occupied the village of Aracinovo located a few kilometres from Skopje. This meant that the only oil refinery, the airport and the highway exit to the capital, Skopje, were within reach of the UCK/NLA. This untenable circumstance and the fact that the capture of the village would mean considerable losses for the Macedonian army, led to negotiations initiated by the Macedonian government between the UCK/NLA and NATO representatives. The result was that NATO with the help of the OSCE evacuated the UCK/NLA fighters from Aracinovo and a ceasefire was concluded that led to peace negotiations first in Skopje and then in Ohrid.

9 The so-called Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) was deployed in Kosovo before the NATO air strikes on Kosovo and the then Yugoslavia to monitor the withdrawal of Yugoslav security forces agreed between Richard Holbrooke and Slobodan Milosevic. At the beginning of the NATO air strikes, a substantial part of the KVM was evacuated to FYROM where they gained a very negative image in the eyes of the ethnic Macedonian population. The reasons for this are manifold, but would require a separate analysis.

Although these attacks - also addressed at some Western embassies as well as some shops and stores whose owners were Muslim (not always Albanian) - were only part of a well-orchestrated campaign initiated by forces within the government, among broad sections of the population they were met not only with disapproval.

At the same time, a campaign by some of the media, which partially tried to depict the OSCE as pro-Albanian, and partially - the height of absurdity - even as fellow combatants of the UCK/NLA, reinforced the negative image of the Organization in the country. It was not particularly helpful that prominent politicians either remained silent or openly accused the international community of cronyism with "Albanian terrorists". Particularly, the state television station MTV made a big show of vilifying the international community. However, other media also followed suit.¹⁰

In the face of this situation, the OSCE Mission attempted to take action. There were a series of talks with representatives of other international organizations and government representatives to initiate an information campaign for the period after the fighting had stopped. However, this was never put into action. Neither was an information campaign that had been laid down in the Ohrid Framework Agreement, finally signed on 13 August 2001 by the government and the Albanian parties (not however by the UCK/NLA), and which was to achieve acceptance among the population for the decisions passed there; the contents of this Agreement are unknown to the large majority of the population even today. It goes without saying that this has encouraged rumours and misunderstandings.

During this period, the OSCE was reproached by various sides for not making its activity transparent. There has only been partial success in, for example, convincing journalists that the OSCE establishes maximum transparency in its activities and structures, but not in its reports that are not destined for the general public. Local and also some international journalists are still suspicious when reporting is done on the "internal affairs" of a state.

After Ohrid - A New Mission?

The Ohrid Framework Agreement established a few new fields of activity for the OSCE Mission. In the preliminary stages of this, Mission members with the support of their colleagues from the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna were actively involved in introducing the Organization's ideas into President Trajkovski's so-called peace plan. This part of the co-operative process occurred in a highly relaxed and collegial atmosphere and the Presidential Office as

10 In July 2001, SITEL and Channel 5, both private television stations, provided a moment of glory in this politically motivated smear campaign, by broadcasting a report from Tetovo without having it verified, in which it was "reported" that shots were fired from a moving OSCE vehicle at a police checkpoint. Reaction to this was not long in coming, OSCE teams were shot at, luckily without injury.

well as representatives of the Foreign Ministry deemed the ideas and recommendations of the Organization as being helpful and took them into consideration.

To be able to fulfil the tasks assigned to it in the Framework Agreement, in the autumn of 2001, the Mission was gradually enlarged by a substantial number of so-called confidence-building monitors, police advisers and police trainers.¹¹ This last increase in personnel was followed by the extension of administrative structures as well as hiring a corresponding number of local personnel so that current Mission strength lies around 240 international Mission members and around 250 local staff.

The new tasks of the OSCE Mission are defined primarily in Annex C of the Framework Agreement. These will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Census

Although the EU and the Council of Europe take a leading role and have the necessary experts at their disposal to carry out comprehensive supervision of the census (which had been delayed several times), the OSCE is, nevertheless, represented by two of its institutions in the so-called steering committee of this mission. The Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) as well as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) represent the viewpoints of the OSCE in this committee, which are laid down in various documents.¹² Currently there are plans to conduct the census between 1 and 15 November 2002.

Elections

The OSCE and/or its institution specialized in election monitoring, the ODIHR, monitored the parliamentary elections on 15 September 2002. The election date, which according to the Framework Agreement was to be on 27 January 2002, had been delayed several times with the argument that the government wanted to pass the majority of the laws established in the Framework Agreement still during the then current legislative period. Another argument against early elections was that the security situation in the former conflict areas would not have allowed elections in the winter or spring of 2002.

11 Cf. OSCE, Permanent Council, Decision on the Further Enhancement of the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje and the Deployment of Police Advisers and Police Trainers, PC.DEC/439, 28 September 2001.

12 For example, in the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, Copenhagen, 29 June 1990, in Arie Bloed (Ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1993, pp. 439-465, or in the HCNM's Lund, Oslo and The Hague Recommendations.

A political agreement was made between the President of the Republic and the four parties who had signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement,¹³ which was directed towards completely changing the election system. Up to that time, a mixed system of majority vote and proportional voting on the basis of lists had been used; now, according to the Agreement, a pure proportional representation system was introduced. The territory has been divided into six districts with almost equally large populations and each district is allotted 20 parliamentary deputies. This new approach as well as other understandings in the Ohrid Agreement, for example, the use of minority languages, required a comprehensive change in the electoral laws.

At the request of the Macedonian government, an election monitoring mission was deployed with a large staff, however, the idea of several politicians to place one monitor at each polling station was not feasible. It was important in this process that the responsibility for the election results not be shifted to the international community. This tendency combined with accusations made after the fact were ascertainable in the elections in the past few years.

The OSCE Mission admitted an election expert to its ranks who, together with an election expert seconded by ODIHR, on the one hand, actively advised the Ministry of Justice regarding the required changes in the electoral laws, and on the other, co-ordinated the activities of the international organizations and bilateral embassies with respect to an improvement in the conditions for conducting higher quality elections. There was a great deal of pressure on the government and the political parties, and the population's loss of confidence had already become visible in the preliminary stages of the election in all the opinion polls. Elections characterized by irregularities like those that had taken place in the past would have had serious consequences for the situation in the country which was just starting to stabilize again.

In the end, the elections took place without any serious incidents, however, they were accompanied by a series of weaknesses imminent to the system, which could not be avoided even through the new electoral laws. In the meantime, the election process has come to an end, a change in government has come to pass and the change in power has - contrary to the fears of some observers - transpired without any serious problems. The joint ODIHR and OSCE monitoring mission, which included over 850 monitors, has proved a successful measure of conflict prevention. However considering the size of the country, such a high number of monitors is not sustainable over a long period. It will therefore be important in future that the Macedonian electoral bodies be strengthened decisively with regard to their competence and professionalism.

13 The President of the Republic, Boris Trajkovski, and the Chairmen of the VMRO-DPMNE, Ljubco Georgievski, the SDSM, Branko Crvenkovski, the DPA, Arben Xhaferi and the PDP, Ymer Ymeri signed the Agreement. The representatives of the EU, François Léotard, and the US, James Pardew, also signed the Agreement as "witnesses".

The UNHCR and the ICRC are the two organizations that are in charge of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. The OSCE Mission through its numerically strong presence in the field has, since the ceasefire came into force, actively supported the efforts of both these organizations. While at the beginning of this process the OSCE was dealing with escorting convoys of returnees and/or contributing to a relaxation of tensions by their mere presence, in the course of the last few months their activities have changed. Constant close contact with the official and unofficial locals in power, discussions in the course of which the necessity of the return of displaced persons as a prerequisite for further development in the region was emphasized, as well as arranging for development projects in those areas where return was made possible, were not without results. The number of refugees and/or internally displaced persons decreased during the course of the year to a few thousand.

It goes without saying that OSCE monitors have not been taking action in a vacuum but that this work is co-ordinated with the above-mentioned leading refugee organizations and with the EU and NATO as well as a whole series of donors and non-governmental organizations.

One of the problems that future Macedonian governments as well as the international community will be confronted with in this connection, is the danger of so-called "creeping ethnic cleansing". The armed conflict in the year 2001 deepened the ethnic divide substantially. For example, the outbreak of fighting in Tetovo brought a more or less voluntary but clearly ascertainable ghettoization with it or what, in other words, has been called "micro-displacement". The ethnic trenches in the city have become clearly visible, whole districts have been occupied and claimed exclusively by one group or the other. There has been a similar occurrence in rural areas, where in ethnically mixed villages the two "halves" have been defined more distinctly than ever. Non-Macedonian and non-Albanian people are often caught in the crossfire between these two groups and are forced to take a position.

This process, which has not only been ascertainable for a long time now in the western part of the country but also in the rural area surrounding Skopje, often takes on a formal character. Although the real estate market is determined by supply and demand, it is also increasingly affected by the loss of prospects for one group or another in a particular place.

If those in power, but also the international community as well are serious about maintaining and nurturing the multi-ethnic character of Macedonia, this creeping process of building "ethnically pure" areas must be stopped by using a whole series of preventive measures. There ought to be several opportunities open to the OSCE here to avoid repeating the mistakes that it has made in other parts of the Balkans.

The Donor Conference

Many of the reports of the OSCE Mission, whose facts and figures and assessments of the situation were used by other organizations and states, were reflected again indirectly in the decisions of the Donor Conference which took place in the spring of 2002. Although the OSCE is not itself a donor organization, many expert reports refer among others to information from the OSCE Mission. The policy of passing on expertise gained locally to third parties was, in the past, one of the factors that determined the political profile and credibility of the Mission. If the Mission were in future to maintain this policy and, in the context of the increasing number of organizations represented on site, build it up, this could contribute to fulfilling its mandate, which calls for a "high political profile".

Strengthening Local Self-Government

As has already been mentioned, the OSCE Mission had long before the conflict broke out advocated the strengthening of local structures and a transfer of power from an over-centralized state government to the then underdeveloped local governments. Close co-operation with the Ministry for Local Self-Government and a series of study trips for groups of mayors and employees of the Ministry as well as several seminars, each organized by the Mission and financed by individual participating States, had a positive effect on the work on a package of legal amendments which were to define anew the relationship between central and local power. At the time of the Ohrid negotiations, these laws were already undergoing the parliamentary process. Nevertheless, it was all the more important that they be included in the Framework Agreement to be able to underline the political significance of the decentralization process for the future of the country.

As a consequence of the tasks laid down in the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the Mission decided on a pilot project in which six municipalities are to exercise co-operation in areas of responsibility like joint administration, joint sewage disposal, creation of interest associations etc. This experiment is designed to have model character for further reforms. The main motivation for implementing this project were fears among the population and within the political spectrum that strengthening decentralization would give the advantage to alleged endeavours towards cantonization.¹⁴ The municipalities taking part in the project were selected deliberately and are characterized by two essential factors: multi-ethnic composition and an acute shortage of human, financial and infra-structural resources. Through this project it is to be dem-

14 Opponents of decentralization love to argue that there is a danger in building ethnic Albanian cantons, which in their view would lead to federalization and ultimately the collapse of state structures. While it is true that such endeavours exist in some Albanian political groups, they are often actually a pretext to delay necessary reforms.

onstrated that dire straits can bridge the divide between ethnic groups and that potential donors deem this posture worthy.

The OSCE as an Organization, and in particular the Mission, are in no way trying to make their mark as a donor organization through this or similar projects, but rather they are endeavouring to set in motion necessary political processes which serve the principles of the Ohrid Framework Agreement on a larger scale. The strength of an OSCE field mission can and must lie in promoting such processes politically.

Advising and Training the Police

The signatories of the Framework Agreement call on, among others, the OSCE to increase training and assistance programmes for police, including:

- professional, human rights, and other training;
- technical assistance for police reform, including assistance in screening, selection and promotion processes;
- development of a code of police conduct;
- co-operation with respect to transition planning for hiring and deployment of police officers from communities not in the majority in Macedonia; and
- deployment as soon as possible of international monitors and police advisers in sensitive areas, under appropriate arrangements with relevant authorities.¹⁵

This appeal is in the context of a commitment by the signatories that the ethnic composition of the police is, by 2004, to reflect the ethnic composition and distribution of the Macedonian population.¹⁶ To this purpose, the signatories committed themselves to training 500 police recruits by July 2002 and another 500 by July 2003. These recruits are to come primarily from the ranks of minorities.

The OSCE Mission has been enhanced with a Police Development Unit. It conducts courses in the Police Academy followed by a training programme in the field lasting several months. Initial experience has already been gained; The first two classes have completed their theoretical training. A lot will depend on how these new officers will be deployed on location and whether the police forces already there will be willing to treat them equally. It has been ascertainable hitherto that the media have definitely given them “special treatment”: In reports on police returning to former crisis areas, it is not “the

15 Cf. President of the Republic of Macedonia, Framework Agreement, 13 August 2001, Annex C, Implementation and Confidence-Building Measures, Article 5.3, at: <http://www.president.gov.mk/eng/info/dogovor.htm>.

16 Cf. *ibid.*, Article 5.2.

police” or “police forces” that are mentioned, but “ethnically mixed police patrols”.¹⁷

The concept developed by the OSCE Mission provides that in addition to Albanians, also members of the other minorities as well as a certain proportion of Macedonian recruits are to be trained, who are to learn and work in a multi-ethnic environment from the beginning of the training. This approach, and the fact that the Ministry of the Interior is to do the actual recruiting, has been creating considerable tensions. Political parties and other lobby groups have since the beginning of this procedure attempted to provide access for “their” candidates. Reports of irregularities are discussed time and again among the general public. The OSCE Mission has repeatedly expressed its standpoint clearly and precisely: Candidates are to be admitted based on their personal performance in a pre-selection and according to an ethnic scheme.

Parallel to police training, police have returned to former crisis areas since the autumn of 2001. The term “return” is in a sense misleading as some of these areas had never maintained a real police presence. In this respect, the return process is very strongly moulded by the work of the OSCE Mission on site. On the one hand, there are a number of so-called police advisers, the majority of whom are themselves police officers, who work together with the ethnically mixed patrols and accompany them at every stage of their work. On the other, the monitors in the field and police advisers focus on persuasion efforts in the preliminary stages to return or when problems occur. Many of the village communities in the former crisis areas, of which the majority of the inhabitants are Albanian, exhibit a deep mistrust of state bodies. There are diverse reasons for this, but it is certainly also because the state neglected these areas. A network of liabilities has thus developed that is in part also linked with organized crime. It almost goes without saying that it would not suit certain individuals that regular police work was being conducted in these areas. Therefore, to a certain degree, OSCE monitors and police advisers had considerable trouble, also in view of the only recently ended conflict, convincing elected as well as informal village heads to allow police to return. All too often, street blockades were used as a means to impede this work. What makes matters worse so soon after the conflict is that political interests in these areas often become amalgamated with those of criminal gangs.

That the return of police to these areas was accomplished at all is a success in itself. However, it would be an illusion to think that normality has set in. Police work has only just begun. Physical presence does not even mean by half that “normal” police work can be achieved. There is still quite a lot of work for state bodies as well as for the OSCE before people will have internalized that the laws are valid throughout the entire country and that misdemeanours and criminal acts must be treated as such independent of the subjective motivation for having carried them out.

17 Here too, the state television station MTV has taken a leading role using this wording in every newscast.

On the other hand, the OSCE has been encouraging and working to reform the police in a direction leading away from its traditional role as a state power instrument and towards a citizen's police that exists to assist them in fulfilling their needs. Here too, extensive structural reforms will be required, which among others can also be supported by the OSCE. However, here too, as in other OSCE fields of activity, it is of utmost importance that the special features of each country of the region be taken into consideration and not that a schematic approach be followed.

Media, Education and Inter-Ethnic Relations

In the last section, the sixth of Annex C of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the international community and above all the OSCE are called upon to assist in the development of the media in minority languages, in particular Albanian, with the goal of improving inter-ethnic relations. Although in the past the Mission had given political support to individual media projects that served to improve the quality of journalism and inter-ethnic relations, because of its former structure, it had not engaged directly in media development. A corresponding unit has now begun work in the Mission.

The founding of the South East European (SEE) University in Tetovo, a private university where classes are held in English, Albanian and Macedonian and which was officially opened on 20 November 2001, represents another breakthrough in the normalization of inter-ethnic relations. Although this has not yet solved the problem of the Albanian-language so-called "Tetovo University"¹⁸ in existence since 1995 definitively, the presence of the private SEE University does guarantee members of the Albanian minority access to higher education in their own language. Incorporating the university into the educational system of the country, an open policy towards members of all ethnic groups, including the majority, as well as establishing a regional network for co-operation with other universities, in particular with those in existence in the country, ought to give decisive impulses for integrating the Albanian population into Macedonian society. The OSCE, in particular the High Commissioner on National Minorities, was the force behind this institution; the Mission has provided assistance and will certainly continue to do so.

The OSCE is, in this same Article of the Framework Agreement, called upon to continue its efforts to improve inter-ethnic relations. This section refers to a series of Mission projects and/or processes set in motion or accompanied by

18 The so-called "Tetovo University", where the only language used is Albanian, was founded in 1995 but never recognized. Its rector, Fadil Suleymani, is known as a nationalist hardliner and primarily his lack of flexibility and realistic political perspective is to blame for the fact that the diplomas of several hundred students have up to now not been recognized. Moreover, Suleymani is regarded as a supporter and ideologue of radical Albanian groups that only support the current peace process conditionally. Cf. the article by Max van der Stoep printed in this volume.

the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. In this connection, one should in particular mention a project that has been running successfully for several years now although it has been accompanied by political controversy since its inception. One side saw this project as giving too much support to the Albanian minority, the other saw the danger of assimilation. The so-called "transition year project" is directed at Albanian pupils in their last year of secondary school. With modern didactic methods, an ethnically mixed couple teaches these pupils specialized topics, in particular specialist terminology in the Macedonian language, which would be useful to them when they take their entrance examination and in the course of their studies at Macedonian-language universities. Courses take place after regular school hours. The goal of this project is to increase the proportion of Albanian students at the universities in Skopje and Bitola, but not use the existing minority quotas, which are seen as ineffective. This project has been a sweeping success with over 1,000 pupils taking part each year, the majority of whom receive good to very good results on their entrance examination.

The existence of the SEE University and its incorporation in the educational system of the country will in future undoubtedly offer opportunities to involve students and pupils of all ethnic groups in projects promoting mutual recognition. Here, the OSCE could have a political effect: Its influence on the youth, who are frustrated by the political system and have been seeking European orientation, is not to be underestimated.

Prospects

Of course, the fact that the OSCE budget was blocked for several months had an effect on the Mission's activities. Thus many ideas and projects as well as the restructuring of the Mission according to the changed circumstances had to be postponed. However, this new phase in the Mission has now begun; it will have to face up to the situation after police return has been accomplished. What should the future of the Mission in the country be? This is a question being discussed in many places.

On the one hand, one must welcome that the government has recognized and acknowledged the positive contribution that the Mission has certainly made. Plans or considerations to close the Mission can surely not be interpreted as meaning further progress in the country with respect to the implementation of the decisions of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The steps made up to now are more a beginning and the process will certainly continue for several more years. The OSCE Mission can and must act as a stabilization factor, a political barometer, but it can and must also act as a conveyor of values and concrete know-how, where this is available.

The current personnel strength of the Mission will not be maintained in future, it was a direct result of the acute crisis situation. A reduction in the

number of Mission members, however, must be accompanied by the selection of qualified specialists to carry out specific tasks who will concentrate on those areas that constitute the focus of Mission work after restructuring. A field presence of a certain size will have to be maintained. Concrete measures to build confidence between the ethnic groups, and between the population and state bodies can now be started for the first time, after the initial formal phase of police return has been completed.

Consideration must still be given to the OSCE engagement in the area of justice and its enforcement, the core of which already exists. The Organization has expertise in this area and there are concrete initiatives, for example, with regard to the ombudsman institution. However, also previous activities on fighting trafficking in human beings, where before the conflict, the Mission had a leading role, should be reflected upon again.

In doing so, however, it is of essential importance not only for the Mission but also for the entire Organization to maintain and/or strengthen the political profile. The co-operation, above all with EU and NATO, but also with other organizations in FYROM during as well as after the acute crisis shows exemplary character and can certainly be considered a success model. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the fact that the political profile of the OSCE could be defined more clearly and concretely; the danger that the Organization will be used to implement rather than formulate political decisions and processes once again became clear in this conflict. Only lucid political concepts, also for a field mission, will help to combat this.