



**Committee for Inter
Community Relations**

Committees for Inter Community Relations - CICR

Establishment, mandate and existing experiences

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Preface

About the project

“Committees for Inter-Community Relations: How to be functional” is a publication prepared within the framework of the “Bona Mente” project. The project is aimed at strengthening the capacities of the Committees for Inter-Community Relations (CICRs) within the municipalities in the country. The municipalities are legally obliged to establish these Committees. The intent of this publication is to serve current and future members of the CICRs in processes of formation, regulation and operation of the Committees. This publication can also serve as a source of information to other readers interested in the work of the CICR, especially municipal councillors, mayors, local administration, citizens etc. The text of the publication was prepared based on research conducted in the course of 2006, analysis of legal texts and international legislation, experts’ opinions and discussions among CICR members participating in the trainings.

The publication contains information about the basis of the establishment of the Committees, the scope of their work, part of the legal framework relevant for their work, examples of the work of some of the existing committees, recommendations for practical functioning of the committees as well as some practical guidance and tools.

This project is financially and technically supported by the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje. The OSCE began its activities in the area of analysis and providing support to CICRs upon a request made by the Association of the Units of the Local Self-Government (ZELS) and at the beginning of 2006, after the consultation cycle was completed, a Conference was organized with municipal and CICR representatives who were invited to attend, in order to give their own interpretations about the Law on Local Self-Government and the role of CICRs. As a follow up to this conference a Model Statute regulating CICRs operations was prepared and distributed.

A hard copy of this brochure may be obtained from CDI and OSCE premises while the electronic version is posted on the web site: www.mic.org.mk

Introduction

1. Committees for Inter community Relations

The process of decentralization and the system of local self-government as one of the crucial foundations of the future peace and stability of the country, gave a more specific role for the institutional fora for inter-ethnic dialogue. Namely, one of the main objectives of developing decentralized governance is *bringing the governance closer to the citizens* and providing a forum where the local people can defend and develop their local interests, contributing towards peaceful and harmonious development of the society, at the same time respecting the ethnic identity and the interests of all citizens. Developed local self-government also offers a good environment for *open social dialogue, consensual democracy and promotion of active citizen participation*. All this is closely related to the possibilities that developed local self-government offers for economic development, of the municipalities individually, but also of the country in general.

In the given context, the country has a long tradition in creating and establishing institutional forms of dialogue between the different ethnic groups. *The Committees for Inter-Community Relations*, stipulated in the Law on Local Self-government of 2002 (LSG Law), are shaped to involve the various ethnic communities in the process of governing. The Committee will also provide the various ethnic communities with equal opportunities to debate commonly acceptable solutions on questions which are of concern that is, are related to their identity, no matter if they are represented in the municipal council or not. In this way these committees play a double role in the local socio-political context:

1. They enable institutional dialogue between the different ethnic communities and ,
2. They act as an instrument for enabling direct citizen participation within the decision making process managed by the elected representatives.

2. Democratic decision making

Decision making in democratic systems is mainly based on the participation of citizens through what is termed "representative democracy". The citizens elect their representatives (members of parliament on the state level and municipal councillors on the local level), and with this election, transfer the decision-making responsibility to the elected officials. The duty of the council is to represent the interests of the citizens in the best possible manner. With this in mind, one of the most important obligations of elected officials is to engage in regular communication with the citizens in order to learn of their needs and inform them on the work of the municipality¹.

With the existing proportional² election system, the municipal councils do not always adequately reflect the diversity of their communities. Most of the complaints which arise are that not every inhabited place has its own representative in the council. However the councillors represent the entire municipality regardless of where they live or which community they belong to. The Mayor is elected by all the citizens of the municipality and shall represent the interests of all the communities and citizens.

The decision makers and the municipality take into account that in addition to ethnic groups, there are other types of communities that exist in society and are distinguished on the basis of gender, age, and other distinctions. These groups have specific interests and needs - such as women, children and youth, elderly people, disabled people etc. It is important that the decision makers provide opportunities for the voices of all these different communities to be heard.

¹ The Law on Local Self Government prescribes mechanisms for citizen participation in Articles 25 – 30.

² Proportional election system: voting for the list of candidates.

Usually different individuals and communities have different perceptions and preferences, due to their heritage, individual or group beliefs, religion and tradition. In order to ensure that their opinions are heard, the LSG Law prescribes additional mechanisms³. Therefore, decision makers should take into consideration how certain policies or decisions influence the relationships among various communities. The Committees for Inter Community Relations – CICR is established as a forum where the different communities (ethnic groups) can present their opinions on issues that are specific to their community⁴.

**The concept of CICR is based on the postulate
“Do not hurt the feelings of others”**

I Establishment and operation of CICR

The Committees for Inter-Community Relations (CICR) are regulated by the Law on Local Self Government from 2002 (LSG Law). Article 55 of the LSG Law prescribes the municipal obligation as follows, for the municipalities “in which more than 20% of the total number of inhabitants of the municipality determined at the last census are members of a certain community a Committee for Inter-Community Relations shall be established.”

1. THE LAW ON LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

The Law on Local Self-government prescribes the following:

1. Obligation for the municipalities to establish CICR
2. Competencies of the Committees are:
 - o to review issues that refer to the relations among the communities represented in the municipality,
 - o to provide opinions and
 - o to propose solutions to resolve issues
3. Obligation of the municipal council is:
 - o to review the opinions and proposals from the Committee
 - o to make decisions on the opinions and proposals.

Article 55⁵

(Committee for Inter-Community Relations)

(1) In the municipality in which more than 20% of the total numbers of inhabitants of the municipality determined at the last census, are members of a certain community, a Committee for Inter-Community Relations shall be established.

(2) The Committee from paragraph 1 of this Article shall be composed of an equal number of representatives of each community represented in the municipality.

(3) The manner of election of the members of the Committee shall be regulated by the Statute.

(4) The Committee shall review issues that refer to the relations among the communities represented in the municipality and shall give opinions and propose ways for their resolving.

(5) The municipal council shall be obliged to review the opinions and proposals from paragraph 4 of this Article and to make a decision with regards to them.

³ The Committee for Inter-Community Relations and citizens participation tools is mentioned in the article 25-30 of the Law on Local Self Government.

⁴ Those issues are prescribed with the LSG Law with the Article 41 and on those issues specific voting procedure is prescribed in order to prevent the majority to simply overrule

⁵ Law on Local Self Government 2002

In addition to the municipalities obliged by the law to establish CICR any other municipality which considers the need for improving dialogue among communities can freely choose to establish such a Committee. The committees have been viewed as forums where the representatives of different communities can discuss issues of importance and present their opinion to the municipal council. Every municipality has the option to establish a CICR when a need for improving inter-community dialogue is perceived. With these committees the municipalities provide a forum through which they can also hear the opinions of the smaller communities that are not appropriately represented in the municipal council and create a dialogue between the communities.

The municipal council is obliged to review the opinions and the proposals given by the CICR and to make a decision⁶ in regards to them⁷.

2. MUNICIPAL STATUTE

The work of the Committees is regulated further by municipal statutes. The Statutes regulate:

- which communities from the municipality will be represented in the Committees;
- the procedures for electing the representatives of each community as CICR members;
- how many members the Committees will have;
- how many members of each community will be represented in the Committees;

Communities

The issue of determining which **communities should be represented** in the CICR is one of the challenges, having in mind that in the municipalities there are communities represented by very small numbers. For example, the last census in Debar showed only two Vlachs registered. The statute of the municipality should mention which communities will be represented in the committee considering the results of the last official Census. The council should decide which communities are represented with significant number in the municipality. Announcement of a public call could help to avoid omitting any relevant community.

The Constitution lists the following communities: Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma, Serbs and Bosnians; these are the groups which have significant numbers on the national level.

There are, however, certain ethnic groups which do not have a large percentage on the national level but are significantly represented in a certain municipality, and are listed in the census as "other", i.e. Egyptians, Croats and others. EXAMPLE: the CICR in Kicevo has an Egyptian representative, because this ethnic group is represented in a significant number in the municipality.

Representatives

The selection of appropriate representatives of the communities brings additional challenges. The selected representatives should be respected and influential citizens within their community. Unlike in the committees of the municipal council, in the case of the CICRs it is not necessary that the members of CICR are only council members. It is possible and even recommended, that at least some of the members of the CICR are not members of the municipal council.

There are several possible methods for electing the Committee members:

⁶ The municipal council is not obliged to accept the opinion or the proposal of the CICR, but in case it takes a negative decision, it should elaborate the reasons for that. The municipal council should review the CIC R proposal and provide a decision within 60 days.

⁷ Law on Local Self-Government, Article 55

- **Nomination by the municipal committee on election and nomination** – after consultation with relevant stakeholders (political parties and registered associations and NGOs of the communities living in the municipality)
- **Public call** for candidates
- **Gathering of citizens** of certain communities / ethnic groups⁸.
- **Proposal of the Mayor** of the municipality confirmed with a vote by the municipal council
- **Survey** of the opinion of the members of the communities.

Advantages and disadvantages of each of the methods:

Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
- Nomination by the municipal committee on election and nomination – after consultation with relevant stakeholders (political parties and registered associations and NGOs of the communities living in the municipality)	- Less time needed - The councillors propose individuals whom they trust and with whom they could cooperate	- The candidates might feel politically bound - Each political party proposes candidates from their members/ associates - Limited choice of candidates - Non represented communities might get a feeling of imposed representation
- Public call for candidatures	- Equal chances - every citizen could apply - Transparent procedure - Interested, committed candidates will apply - Transparent public criteria - Objective procedure	- receiving too many proposals - depends on the level of awareness of the communities and their proactive approach - complicated procedure
- Citizens gathering of citizens of a certain community organized by the municipality; - Publicly announced. - similar procedure that applies to election of members of neighbourhood self-government units (NSGU)	- Clear procedure - Transparent - Objective procedure	- Possibilities of manipulation, i.e. by inviting only “friends” - Low level of interest of the communities - Logistics – providing appropriate space; organizing the counting - Difficulties in maintaining the order in some cases.
- Proposal of the Mayor of the municipality and voted by the municipal council	- Simple procedure	- subjective opinion
- Survey – of the opinion of the members of the communities	- Structured approach - Easy to interpret results - Transparent and objective	- Possibly a complicated procedure to identify the target population within the municipality - possibility to miss some members - expenses

⁸ The procedure would be similar to the one of selection of members of Neighbourhood Self-Government Units (NSGU). The municipality should organize a citizens gathering by announcing a public call for election of CICR members.

Findings of the OSCE and CDI survey on the existence and work of CICR⁹

- Establishment of CICR by public call

A public call for the election was made in a total of 5 municipalities (Kichevo, Struga, Mavrovo and Rostusa, Cucer Sandevo, and Suto Orizari); while 9 stated that no public call was made.

- Election of CICR members

Generally, elections of CICR members were conducted by the Councils and citizens remained generally uninformed on the existence of the CICR. Committee members were proposed primarily by the councillors and by the Municipal Commission on Mandate and appointment, though in 4 municipalities NGOs and citizen groups made proposals for external members (Debar, Struga, Tetovo, and Vrapciste).

Number of members of CICR and number of representatives from each community

The law¹⁰ prescribes that each community should be equally represented in CICR regardless of the proportions in the total population in the municipality. This is to provide equal voice to all communities.

EXAMPLE: Equal number means either one representative, or two, or three or more representatives from the communities.

The total number of CICR representatives should provide possibilities for discussion. *EXAMPLE: if there are two or three communities represented in the municipality, and they are represented with only one representative each the possibilities for discussion are limited to the capacity of those two members of the committee. In those cases it would be advisable to have 2 or 3 representatives of each of the communities so there is some kind of forum to discuss issues. In addition, if there are 7-8 communities represented in the municipality, the nomination of more than 2 representatives from each community would result in too large a committee, and practically, the work would be very difficult.*

The municipal statute should determine the number of CICR members that is optimal for open and sincere debate, providing an opportunity for representation of different views within each of the communities.

3. RULE BOOK

The Rule Book is another formal document that is relevant for the regulation of all necessary issues of the operation of the CICR, without overburdening the content of the Statute of the municipality. Unlike the Statute of the municipality, the Rule Book is not a legislative obligation, but rather a document which is *for internal use of the CICR* and therefore it is to be developed and adopted by the CICR itself.

The Rule Book's primary role is to regulate and describe the "technical" aspects of the organization and operation of certain bodies, usually those that are working on the creation of certain policies and the adoption of certain acts, decisions, and resolutions. The main benefit of having such a document is that it would make the ground rules for the operation of the CICR equally clear for everyone, would help to create a transparent and well-organized entity, would provide more efficient and effective debates and would help to avoid misinterpretations and arguments over the equal treatment of the various issues by the CICR.

⁹ In the course of 2006 OSCE has organized a survey to analyze the existence and work of the CICR. The survey examined the existence of CICR in 21 municipalities that are obliged to establish one.

¹⁰ See LSG 2002, Article 55(2).

In this particular case the Rule Book would contain provisions on the details of the CICR composition, organization of the operation (initiation of sessions, time, deadlines, authorizations and obligations of the CICR members in the internal context, administrative-technical support, manner of communication with the municipal council and other relevant entities and so on). The CICRs could ask for technical support from the municipal administration when elaborating their Rule Books.¹¹

4. SUPPORT BY THE MUNICIPALITY

In order to properly function the CICR needs to be provided with certain conditions. In order to enable the work of the Committees the municipalities should provide the working conditions as follows:-

- **Working space** – room for the committee meetings, working materials – access to needed laws, access to the Internet, room for the preparatory work and research of the Committee members.
- **Administrative support** – a responsible person should be allocated within the municipal administration who will organize the administration of the committee i.e. taking notes of the meetings, providing necessary documents and other material.
- **Budget for the work of the committee** – the work of the committees requires certain expenses related to:
 - *Daily expenses* of the CICR members. The members are not entitled to salaries, but could be remunerated for their daily expenses (transportation and food expenses) to attend the meetings¹²
 - Budget for the *activities proposed by the committee* – the municipality could include in its annual working program activities proposed by the committee and accordingly plan the budget.

¹¹ For more detailed guidance for the content of a CICR Rule Book, see Appendix II.

¹² Reference Law on Execution of the Budget of R.M. 2007 Article 13 - 14,

II MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEES

Viewed as consultative bodies of their councils and as forums to enable all communities in the municipalities to present their opinions on certain topics and issues, the mandate and the role of the Committees can be summarized in line with the following topics that will be further elaborated:

- **Legally binding issues** related to the Article 41 of LSG Law
- **Resolving conflicts** and misunderstandings
- **Promoting good inter community relations**
 - by providing opinions and recommendations to the Council¹³
 - by informing and clarifying issues for the citizens (communities)

1. Legally binding issues

Cases which are the subject of discussion of the CICR are stipulated in the Law on Local Self-government.

Article 41

(Work at the Council Sessions)

(3) The regulations referring to culture, use of the languages and alphabets spoken by less than 20% of the citizens in the municipality, determining and use of the coat of arms and flag of the municipality, shall be adopted by the majority of votes of the present council members, within which there must be a majority of votes of the present council members belonging to the communities which are not the majority of population in the municipality.

The CICR's role is to present the opinions of different communities, and in addition, to communicate with the communities, especially to explain situations that do not have an ethnic connotation, but may have been interpreted as such. Considering the complex socio-economic environment and situation, the municipalities do not always have the opportunity to solve the problems in the way and with the dynamic that they want. Sometimes there is misinterpretation, misinformation, speculation and rumours - leading to the interpretation of various actions as being taken on the basis of ethnicity.

Communication and transparent work of the units of local self government is one of the key points in building trust and respect.

In cases of deciding on issues that are of specific interest to the communities the municipal council is obliged to use the principle of double majority (so called Badinter). The Law on Local Self-government lists the following:

1. Culture
2. Use of languages
3. Names of streets and other infrastructure facilities
4. Determination and usage of the coat of arms and the flag of the municipality.

The double so called "**Badinter**" majority prescribes that certain decisions of the municipal council should be adopted by the majority of votes of the councillors in addition to the majority of the votes of the present representatives of the communities that are not in majority in the municipality.

This is inserted in the law in order to stimulate dialogue among communities and to encourage that for specific issues the smaller communities are consulted and consent.

¹³ The CICR would provide opinion and recommendations to the Council, for issues that fall within the competencies of the municipalities, such as education, urban planning, communal service, social care and so on. Municipal competencies are stipulated with the Article 22 of the Law on Local Self-Government.

1. In the area of culture this rule is applicable in the following cases¹⁴:
 - Institutional and financial support to the cultural institutions and projects¹⁵
 - Promotion of folklore, customs, old crafts and similar cultural values
 - Organization of cultural events
 - Support of various forms of creation.
2. Regarding the usage of languages, the Law on Local Self-government gives clear rules:
 - In the municipalities, the official language, besides the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic Alphabet, is the language and the alphabet used by at least 20% of the citizens of the municipality¹⁶.
 - For the usage of the languages and alphabets spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the municipality, the decision is made by the municipal council.

55% of the population in the country lives in municipalities where at least one community is represented with more than 20%¹⁷.

3. The names of the streets, squares, bridges and other infrastructure facilities are a decision of the municipal council following the “Badinter” majority and the following rules:
 - the name of the infrastructure facility can be determined with geographical, ethnographic, historical or other meaning, name of a distinguished person from history, science or culture, other suitable names as well as the title of a significant event and date, based on a list of names determined by the municipal council after receiving consent from the Government.

It is not allowed to give a name to an infrastructural facility which insults the dignity of the Country, insults the national feelings of the Macedonian citizens and of citizens of *other states as well as if it deteriorates the* inter-community relations, customs and the public moral¹⁸.

4. The determination and usage of the coat of arms and the flag of the municipality is regulated in the Law on the Usage of the Flags of the Communities in the Republic of Macedonia, which stipulates the following:
 - The municipal council adopts a decision on determination of the competent entity for hoist of the flag of the community in the municipalities where the majority of the citizens (above 50%) belong to a certain community.

There are several cases in municipalities where a decision on the municipal flag and coat of arms was reached in the municipal council without previous consulting with the CICR. The explanation was that the issue was solved on a “**higher political level**” and the CICR opinion was considered not relevant.

The above mentioned matters are all to be considered as issues concerning relations among communities, hence whenever the municipal council adopts an act related to the m, it is obliged to take into consideration the opinion of the Committee for Inter Community Relations. Therefore it is recommended that the CICR and the municipal council establish a mode of regular communication in order to ensure that the CICR is regularly informed about the relevant points on the council's agenda. In this case, the CICR would be given enough space to convene a session and discuss the issue/s, and even consult experts on the particular issue. The CICR is also

¹⁴ The following legislation is relevant: Law on Culture, Law on Libraries, Law on Museums, Law on monuments, Law on Protection of the Cultural Heritage

¹⁵ For an example, the construction of monuments falls under this category of issues.

¹⁶ The use of languages is one of the most often raised issues when discussing inter-community relations in the municipalities. However, in many cases *due to the high cost* and financial incapability of the municipalities the full implementation of this policy was postponed.

¹⁷ Data from the official census of population and households in R.M. held in 2002.

¹⁸ Law for determination of names of streets, squares, bridges and other infrastructure facilities, official gazette of R.M. 66/2004

entitled to ask assistance from the municipal administration in elaboration of certain questions. As a final procedural step in these cases, the CICR submits its opinion/proposal to the council before the council reaches its decision on the particular issue.

2. Resolving conflicts and misunderstandings Cases that could be discussed by the Committee

There are cases that could indirectly raise the interethnic intolerance and mistrust, or generate a loss of trust. In everyday life, (influenced by the daily politics) there are cases that some people tend to interpret as ethnically motivated or as inter ethnic conflict. Further analysis of such cases would show that they were not ethnically motivated and that the solution is as simple as having constructive discussion on the topic. The following cases were noted by citizens as well in the media reports in the past years:

- a) Disputes on herding cattle
- b) Destruction/ vandalism of graveyards / road signs
- c) Disputes between children in schools and in the streets
- d) Destruction of public transport busses (throwing stones at the buses, trains).

Disputes on herding cattle

In the villages, children are usually the ones that take care of the herding. Some times there are cases in which the flocks, through negligence, are herded in the wrong place i.e. on the public pasture instead of on a private property. These are everyday disputes in areas where herding is a major business of the population. These cases have always occurred - the problem arises when they are presented to the public in the context of interethnic relations.

There were cases in ethnically mixed municipalities where the herd entered the graveyard of the neighbouring village. Unfortunately the flock keeper was of a different ethnicity and the case was presented as interethnic assault that was done deliberately.

Discussing possible solutions¹⁹ is more important than going into further analysis of the motives for such behaviour and such cases. This kind of banal case of human negligence (sometimes it is physically impossible to manage the flock) sometimes has the potential to be wrongly interpreted and thereby increase tension. In order to prevent such cases, the municipal CICR or even the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG)²⁰ should discuss the case, give their opinion, and/ or propose a possible solution to the municipal council. It is important that the public is informed on the CICR opinion.

Destruction/ Vandalism of graveyards / road signs

In the past several years the media reported on several cases of destruction of graveyard monuments. Rarely were the perpetrators found. In some cases it was noted that it was done by drug or alcohol abusers or children at play. Still, these cases raised the tension in the affected regions. In such cases where there is no valid explanation or information, the public weaves its own interpretations and stories. Sometimes these "interpretations" involve allegation or blame toward the other ethnicity.

¹⁹ In the past, approximately 10 years ago especially in the rural area on the basis of the neighborhood self government or the village, existed an institution known as peace council composed of the village wise (old) people that mediated different disputes of the villagers.

²⁰ Community Advisory Group – CAG – composed of the representatives of the local police station, municipality, mayor and respected citizens that discuss the issues regarding the security situation in the municipality.

It is common for the public to issue false stories and interpretations in cases in which sufficient information is missing or nonexistent. That is why it would be beneficial if the municipal council would ask the CICR to explore these cases and state their opinion. This opinion does not replace the official police investigation but should provide a mutual joint statement of representatives of all the ethnic groups in the society to condemn the perpetrators and the acts of vandalism.

In cases where the perpetrators are known and/or different communities are involved, the CICR could organize joint meetings with representatives from the different communities to discuss and to prevent further tensions or similar situations.

Disputes between children in the schools and on the streets

It is in human nature to build confrontation and develop rivalries, and these tendencies are very much present in childhood. Rivalries arise throughout life – between neighbouring cities, towns, villages or sports fans, and are clearly prevalent between schools or different classes in the schools. These naturally-occurring rivalries can sometimes escalate into physical or verbal fights between individuals or groups. Many children at some point participate in some kind of confrontation between rivals.

Recent cases of fights between high school students have resulted in increased security measures by the schools. In extreme cases, the parents requested that the students study in separated schools, or, if this was not possible, that at least the classes be organized in different shifts.

This problem is one in which the CICR could play an active role by working with all involved and engaging in discussion with those responsible, and with school representatives (teachers), parents, and students. Uncovering the real motive for this behaviour would lead to the creation of appropriate, long-term, and sustainable solutions.

Raising children is the duty of the entire community – the joint responsibility of family, schools, and society. As it is in the public interest to raise healthy and productive future generations, it is important that the responsibility be shared and joint efforts pursued. Children mimic the examples of adults, but do not always know how to interpret what they see and hear. The behaviour that is learned in childhood determines how individuals will behave as adults, and so it is in the interest of all to discover the source of these conflicts and find real long-term solutions.

Case of Sopsishte

A group of students attacked a student from another village at the bus station. Since the student was severely injured the entire community of parents was alerted. The tension rose to a point where the villagers stopped the buses and did not allow them to travel to the village of the attackers out of fear for the security of their children. They accused the entire community of the other village.

Having in mind the very sensitive inter ethnic relations involved in the case, the police proposed that their action could only additionally raise the tension. They suggested that the communities discuss the case and try to find a joint solution.

The local CICR managed to calm the situation and proposed several measures and activities to prevent further tensions or similar cases. The committee of representatives from both villages proposed and organized a sports tournament for mixed teams from both communities. Those activities were fully supported by the municipal authorities.

Destruction of public transport buses (throwing stones at buses and trains)

Cases have occurred where public buses were attacked with stones, and sometimes even the drivers were attacked.

As a result of such incidents, the public transport company refused to maintain bus services to these villages. This was perceived by citizens as an ethnically motivated decision.

In these cases, both sides suffer losses. The transport company must spend money to repair the buses and faces a negative campaign and negative public image. The citizens face problems in not being able to access public transport.

A possible response is to discuss the issues and try to find a common solution. Perhaps the citizens are not happy with the regularity / timeliness of the public transport, and the company might have their own view of the situation, etc.

3. Promoting good inter community relations - hints on possible CICR activities

As previously mentioned, the work of the Committees is regulated by the Law on Local Self-Government, the municipal Statutes and their Rule books. In order to provide for more efficient work, the Committees could adopt their own annual working plans. Planned activities of the committees should be adopted by their municipal council and incorporated into the municipal working programs and budgets.

In cases of dispute between two or more sides CICR members could meet and discuss with the concerned parties to build common understanding on the case.

If convenient the Committees could issue statements to inform the citizens on their position and initiatives on specific cases.

In cooperation with the municipal councils the Committees could initiate some activities that will enable cooperation and communication among communities such as:

- organization of different gatherings, cultural and sport activities
- publishing / announcing their opinions on cases that could possibly raise inter community tensions

The Sopishte Committee has been very active, forwarding proposals to the Council. Here are some of the cases in which they have been engaged so far:

- Initiated establishment of an ethnically mixed football league;
- Suggested that the sports centre should be built at a central location equally accessible to every settlement in the municipality;
- Mediated in a conflict amongst groups of young people from different ethnicities.
- Presents the conclusions from each session of the CICR to the municipal council.

Meeting aimed to improve relations between villages of Arachinovo and Brnjarci ²¹

Upon the initiative of the Mayor of the municipality Gazi Baba , a meeting aimed at improving the relations between inhabitants from the villages of Arachinovo and Brnjarci was held on 17th January. The Mayor of the Arachinovo village, two MPs, Chairmen of both villages' neighbourhood self-government units, Commanders of Police stations from the two villages, high-level officials from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) in charge of the city of Skopje attended the meeting.

The reason for the meeting was an incident which according to the witnesses was caused from the area populated by ethnic Albanian villagers.

All attendees condemned the incident and expressed readiness to intensify cooperation in order to solve the case. It was also agreed to create a joint Council of the citizens from both villages Brnjarci and Aracinovo designed to resolve problems.

In the end it was agreed that the next meeting would take place in Arachinovo.

²¹ Both municipalities are not required to establish CICR . Still the existing problems required some kind of preventive action to build trust between two communities.

Proposals for the content of the Rulebook for the CICR

After the regulation of the CICR issue in the municipal statute and the actual formation of the CICR, some practical issues on its functioning should be regulated with an internal Rule book. The following issues would be relevant to regulate:

- Language to be used in the CICR sessions and eventually the translation (it is recommended that *one language*, understood by all, is used, and for the ones who are not in condition to use it, to provide translation by the municipal administration) .
- Details on the constitution of the CICR (who calls the constitutional session, the procedure of constitution, minimum quorum needed for constitution.).
- Procedure of election of a chairperson of the CICR.
- Authorizations and obligations of the CICR members - the Chairman should be “first among the equal”, only managing the sessions, and also maybe have the authorization to inform the public on the CICR activities. Beyond the standard list of rights and obligations, in this context the principles of tolerance, understanding, dialogue, argumentation, should be specially emphasized.
- On which occasions the CICR will meet, how regularly and where.
- CICR sessions - who calls the sessions, what are the deadlines and procedures for informing members of the session, how is the agenda defined and amended, how and who prepares and distributes the documentation relevant for the session; what is the quorum for holding a session,²² who takes the minutes and how are they verified; who gives administrative and technical support and how, how do they debate and conclude/decide on various types of issues, how do they communicate their documents to the council and others, and so on.
- How will the CICR identify and select the relevant issues. It could be in some of the following ways:
 - Analyzing the agendas of the municipal council ;
 - At the initiative of the municipal councillors or communication of the local administration
 - At the initiative of the CICR members themselves
 - By reviewing proposals/initiatives submitted by citizens
 - By reviewing proposals of informal and formal groups of citizens (political parties, NGOs, urban/neighbourhood units)
 - By reviewing the general acts and provisions of the municipality and estimating the impact of their implementation on the different ethnic communities and their relations.
- Manner of verification of the relevant issues .
- Type and format of documents issued by the CICR .
- Manner of communication of the CICR outputs with the council and others .
- Procedures for adoption and amendment of the Rulebook.
- Usage of technical/expert inputs (by the administration or outside experts) .
- Collaboration of the CICR with other stakeholders, communication with the citizens, transparency in their operation.

²² Ideally all members should be present in order to keep the balance between the communities

List of Municipalities that are obliged to establish CICR

According to the CDI survey the following municipalities are obliged to establish CICR. In each municipality representatives from the mentioned communities should participate. The municipality could invite additional members according to their judgment.

No.	Municipality	Communities in significant number that shall be represented
1.	Brvenica	Macedonian, Albanian, Serbian
2.	Vranestica	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish,
3.	Gostivar	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Serbian
4.	Debar	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma
5.	Dolneni	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Bosniak
6.	Zelenikovo	Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, Serbian, Bosniak
7.	Jegunovce	Macedonian, Albanian, Serbian, Roma
8.	Kicevo	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Vlach, Serbian
9.	Krusevo	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Bosniak,
10.	Kumanovo	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Vlach, Serbian
11.	Mavrovo and Rostuse	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish
12.	Petrovec	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Serbian, Bosniak
13.	Sopiste	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish
14.	Struga	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Serbian, Bosniak
15.	Tetovo	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Serbian, Bosniak
16.	Caska	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Bosniak
17.	Cucer Sandevo	Macedonian, Albanian, Serbian
18.	Skopje	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Vlach, Serbian, Bosniak
19.	Butel	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Vlach, Serbian, Bosniak
20.	Cair	Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Vlach, Serbian, Bosniak
21.	Suto Orizari	Macedonian, Albanian Turkish, Roma, Serbian, Bosniak

References

Web site www.zels.org.mk of the Association of Units of Local Self Government - ZELS is a useful tool regularly updated with information and LSG activities. On the ZELS web site you could find more information on:

- Template on municipal statute
- Template of recommendations that ZELS prepared and sent to the municipalities regarding the establishment of CICR

Law on LSG (Official Gazette 5/2002)

Law on Execution of the Budget of R.M. 2007

Law on Culture (Official Gazette 59/2003)

Law on Libraries (Official Gazette 66/2004)

Law on Museums (Official Gazette 66/2004)

Law on monuments (Official Gazette 66/2004)

Law on Protection of the Cultural Heritage (Official Gazette 20/2004)

Law for determination of names of streets, squares, bridges and other infrastructure facilities, (Official Gazette 66/2004)