

# **Survey Report of Election Officials in the Republic of Macedonia**

## **Parliamentary Elections 2002**

Prepared by IFES in cooperation with SMMRI

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### ACRONYMS/ TERMS USED IN REPORT

<b>EB</b>	– Electoral Board
<b>MEC</b>	– Municipal Election Commission
<b>REC</b>	– Regional Election Commission
<b>SEC</b>	– State Election Commission
<b>IC</b>	– International Community

**Ruling parties** – refers to parties in power prior to 2002 election

**Opposition** – refers to parties in opposition prior to 2002 election

## INTRODUCTION

### 2002 Election Overview

On September 15, 2002 the Republic of Macedonia held its third parliamentary election since it seceded from Yugoslavia in 1991. The election had special significance because it followed a period of armed conflict, an internationally-brokered Framework Agreement, and a still-fragile multi-ethnic environment. Many parts of Northern Macedonia suffered substantial infrastructure damage during the conflict. Added to this was the significant population movement within and from the crisis areas. These factors proved challenging to conducting the elections. In addition, there was new election legislation that required new procedures and operations, unfamiliar to election officials and new election management bodies.

The election was seen as a test of whether Macedonia could be considered headed in the right direction toward political stability and economic growth. Previous elections had been characterized by administrative disorganization and political polarization. The lack of efficient and transparent administrative structures had fueled claims of irregularities and served as an excuse for instability in the country.

The beginning of the election period was not very promising, as a new electoral management structure had very little time in which to organize the elections. Due to last minute changes to the legal framework, the President of the State Election Commission (SEC) and SEC members were appointed less than 70 days before the elections. The SEC consists of a President and deputy appointed by the President of the Republic. Eight members and their deputies are appointed by Parliament to either four or five year terms. Both opposition and ruling parties are represented.

Once established, the SEC still had to appoint lower level commissions. Six Regional Election Commissions (RECs) were established, one for each of the six new electoral districts. 34 Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) were established, each responsible for coordinating operations in a specified number of the total of 123 municipalities. Finally, 2,973 Electoral Boards were established, one each to conduct the operations of the polling stations.

### Technical Election Assistance

The election was the focus of IFES Macedonia programming in 2002. The IFES Electoral Reform Assistance program was designed to improve the legal framework for elections; increase the capacity of election administration structures and personnel to effectively administer elections; and conduct voter education activities. In cooperation with its European affiliate, IFES Ltd, IFES also provided the SEC with expert advice on operational matters such as ballot security, compliance with new legal requirements, standardization and distribution of election materials and additional human and material resources. Moreover, IFES coordinated the assistance of the international community in Macedonia in order to ensure complementary election assistance.

### Election Success

The praise for the elections was nearly universal, with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) declaring that the elections were held in compliance with international standards and that Macedonia had “passed the test” of democracy. It is important to highlight the change in the SEC’s performance relative to past elections, notably as a result of the appointment of a new SEC President and renewed efforts by the entire commission to operate in an efficient and transparent manner.

Nonetheless, there were challenges. The SEC had very limited organizational capacity, for example, relying on donations from various agencies of the Government to cover such essentials as office space, computers, data processing and administrative and secretarial support. In many cases the President and Commission performed their own secretarial and support functions. Operational support, through the provision of Logistical Support Officers to Regional and Municipal Election Commissions was instrumental in ensuring that operations, such as material transfers, were properly understood and smoothly conducted. This activity was funded by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and implemented by IFES LTD. Electoral Boards relied on the polling procedures manual and effective

training program developed and implemented by IFES and the SEC, and IFES provided extensive financial resources and creative input to the Ministry of Justice and SEC to carry out voter education and public information campaigns.

**Survey of Election Officials: Objectives and Methodology**

Shortly after the elections, the SEC and IFES Macedonia decided that it would be useful to conduct an opinion survey of election officials in Macedonia. It was hoped that this exercise would help the newly created SEC establish itself as a permanent entity, as envisioned by the legislation that created it. IFES Macedonia contracted Strategic Marketing and Media Research Institute (SMMRI), a survey and marketing organization in Skopje, to conduct the survey. The principal objective of the project was to assist the SEC in measuring the attitudes of electoral officials regarding the election process in general, and with specific reference to the 2002 parliamentary elections. It also aimed to solicit recommendations for how to improve election administration in Macedonia.

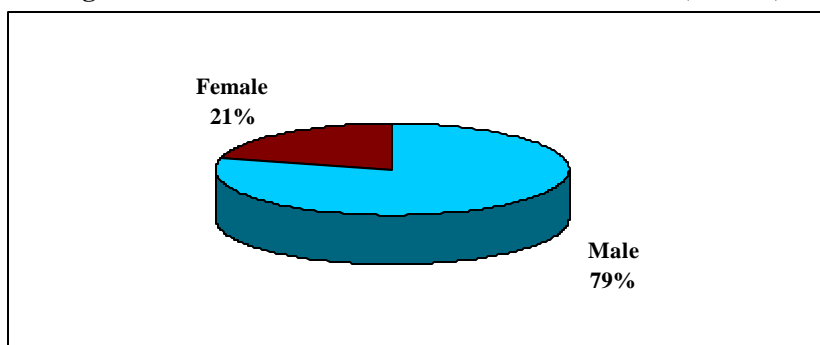
This survey was conducted between February 21 and March 6, 2003 with 1,328 election officials throughout Macedonia. A total of 25 Regional Election Commission (REC) officials, 120 Municipal Election Commission (MEC) officials, and 1,183 Electoral Board (EB) officials were interviewed for the survey. The REC and MEC officials were randomly selected from the total population of REC and MEC officials who worked on the 2002 parliamentary election. The sample for EB officials used a two-stage probability sample and covered all major regions with probability proportional to the registered voters in each region. The fieldwork and data processing, as well as a significant portion of the data analysis for this survey were conducted by SMMRI.

The percentages used in this report have been rounded to whole numbers. Due to rounding, the total percentages in some figures may not add exactly to 100%. The title or question text in each figure in the report notes the number of respondents who were asked the question being presented in the figure. This number is denoted by the “n” value.

**I. DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Gender:** Most election officials in Macedonia are men (79%), with women (21%) accounting for a small percentage of these officials. This is especially the case among ethnic Albanian officials with only 4% of these officials being women. Albanian parties also follow this pattern with only 5% of the election officials appointed to the various electoral boards by these parties being women. Women are more likely to be represented at the higher electoral levels, comprising 31% of the membership of the Regional and Municipal Election Commissions (REC and MEC, respectively). At the Electoral Board (EB) level, MECs<sup>1</sup> were almost twice as likely to nominate women (34%) than political parties (18%). The small percentage of female election officials indicates a need for efforts to involve more women in electoral administration in future elections.

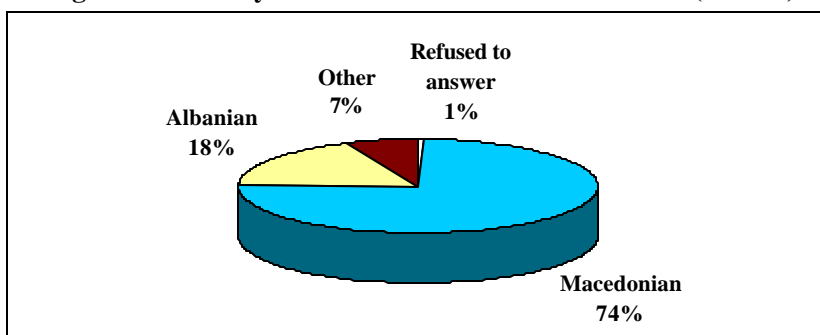
**Figure 1. Gender of Electoral Officials in Macedonia (n=1328)**



**Age:** Most election officials in Macedonia are middle aged (30-39 years 26% and 40-49 years 32%). Twenty-four percent of election officials are between the ages of 18 and 29, while 19% are 50 or above. As would be expected, election officials in the higher level REC and MEC tend to be older. Less than 15% of election officials at both these levels are younger than forty.

**Ethnicity:** Three quarters of election officials (74%) are of Macedonian ethnicity, 18% are Albanian, and 7% are other ethnicities. The percentage of election officials of Albanian ethnicity is highly concentrated in the northwest part of the country, where 56% of the election officials are Albanian. Election officials of Macedonian ethnicity are the majority in all other regions of the country.

**Figure 2. Ethnicity of Electoral Officials in Macedonia (n=1328)**



**Political Parties:** Political parties are responsible for nominating the majority of election commissioners in Macedonia. Both ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian election officials are primarily nominated by political parties to their position. Ninety percent of ethnic Albanians who replied to this question were nominated by Albanian political parties, while 9% were nominated by higher level election commissions<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Under the Law on Election of MPs, the 4 EB members are appointed by the political parties, while the presidents are appointed by the MECs. However, the survey results show that the respondents did not have an understanding of who was responsible for their appointment.

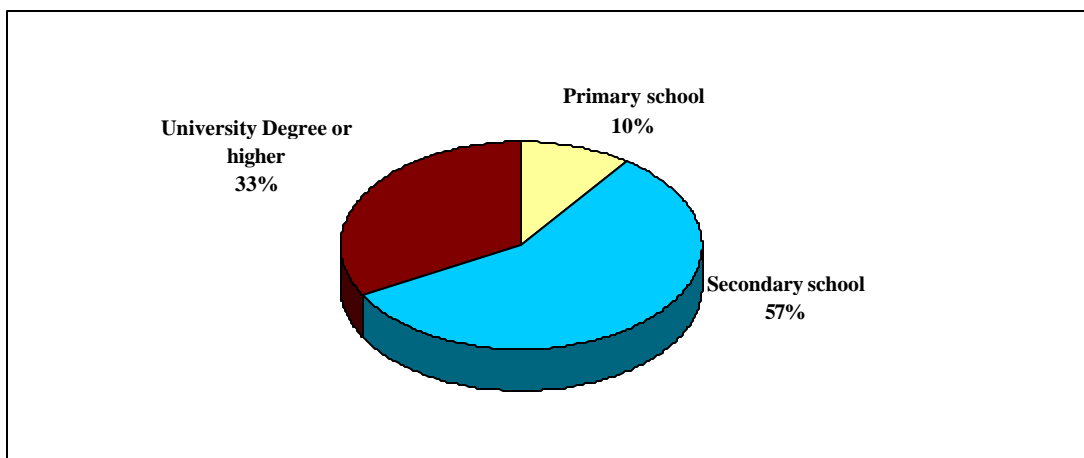
<sup>2</sup> This refers to the SEC, RECs and MECs.

A similar pattern is observed for ethnic Macedonian election officials (88% Macedonian political parties, 12% higher level election commissions).

**Education:** Most officials (57%) have a secondary school level of education, a third (33%) have a university degree, while fewer officials (10%) have only finished elementary school. Almost all REC and MEC members (95%) have university degrees. A majority of Electoral Board (EB) officials have a secondary school education (60%) while 31% have a university degree.

The level of education is, on average, higher for female officials. Fifty-one percent of female officials have a university degree, while only about a third of the male officials (34%) have this level of education. A plurality of officials appointed by higher level election commissions has a university degree (47%), significantly higher than the rate for party appointees.

**Figure 3. Level of Education among Election Officials (n=1328)**

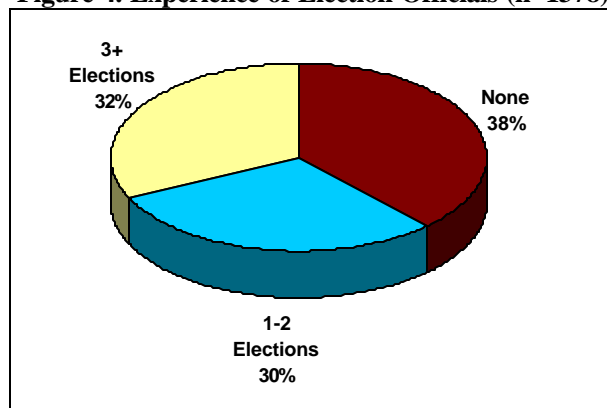


## II. EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

### Experience

Most election officials in Macedonia have had experience working on previous elections (62%, Figure 4). For 38% of election officials, the 2002 election was their first experience as an election official. The level of experience correlates positively with the level of election commission, i.e. REC and MEC members are more likely to be experienced (84% with previous experience) than EB members (51% with previous experience).

**Figure 4. Experience of Election Officials (n=1378)**



*“Were the 2002 parliamentary elections your first experience as an election body member?” (n=1328)*

Ethnic Albanians are far less likely to have worked a previous election (49%) than ethnic Macedonians (65%). As Albanian ethnic officials predominate in the northwest region of the country, this region of the country has the largest percentage of first-time election officials in the country (50%). Albanian parties were also represented on election commissions by relatively inexperienced officials, as 55% of officials nominated by these parties were first-time officials.

As stated earlier, women do not make up a significant percentage of election officials in the country. They also tend to have less experience than male election officials. While 36% of men were first-time election officials, this percentage was 50% for women.

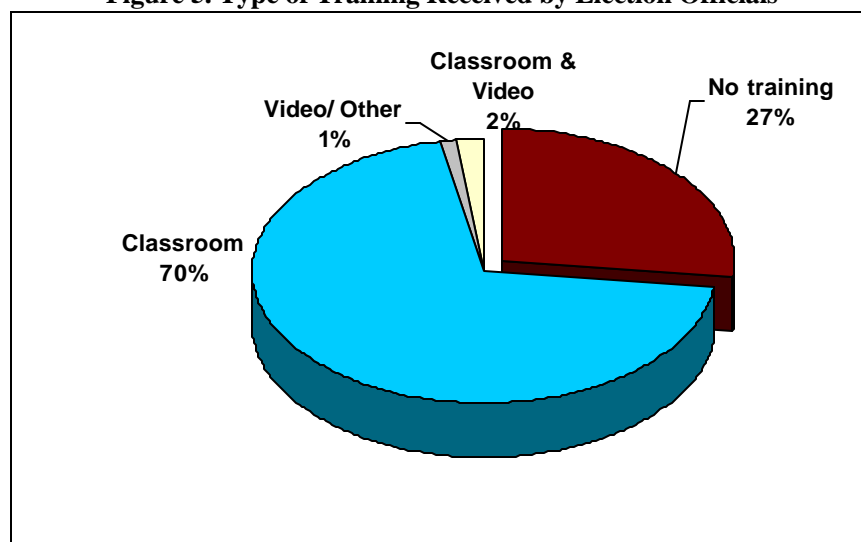
One notable finding is that the presidents of the various election commissions were only slightly more likely to have had experience in previous elections (70%) than regular members of the commissions (67%).

### Training

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of election officials report receiving training for their duties for the parliamentary elections in 2002 (Figure 5 next page). This training program was implemented by IFES and was the first election official training program approved by the SEC. The percentage of election officials who report receiving the training is a higher percentage of officials receiving training than IFES calculated following the election. There are several possible reasons for this incongruence. One is a phenomenon most commonly associated with post-election surveys where more people report having voted than actually did in the election. Similar to voting, training is probably seen as a positive contribution and many election officials who did not receive training might have reported otherwise. In the case of training for election officials, this is also a desirable thing for job performance and hence probably led to an inflation of yes answers. Another factor may be a misunderstanding of what is meant by training. For instance, some election officials may have gone through informal training with their

supervisors and answered 'yes' when asked about the formal training during the survey (Note: Respondents were asked if they had received *any* training).

**Figure 5. Type of Training Received by Election Officials**



*Did you receive any training for your duties in the 2002 parliamentary elections? (n=1328)*

Almost all election officials who received training received official classroom training (96%). One percent received training through a video and 3% received both kinds of training.

Location and ethnicity are once again important factors in describing the differences in the types of training received by election officials. A greater percentage of officials received the training in Skopje (86%) and in the southwest of the country (81%) while a significantly smaller percentage of election officials in the northwest of the country received training (52%). A similar difference is observed between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians. Seventy-nine percent of ethnic Macedonians report having received some sort of training for the 2002 election. This compares to 52% of ethnic Albanians who report having received training.

The smaller percentage of officials receiving training in the Northwest may be related to the fact that political parties in this region generally took a long time nominating officials to EBs. The organization of the election process in the northwest region was also hampered by logistical difficulties in the post-conflict period<sup>3</sup>. Because a majority of the election officials in this region are ethnic Albanians, the late appointments may have disproportionately impacted the lack of training mentioned by ethnic Albanian officials in the survey.

A matter of some concern is the fact that 28% of first-time election officials did not receive training for the 2002 elections. This was especially prevalent for first-time ethnic Albanian officials as 50% of these officials report not receiving any training for the election.

<sup>3</sup> For further details, please see Introduction.



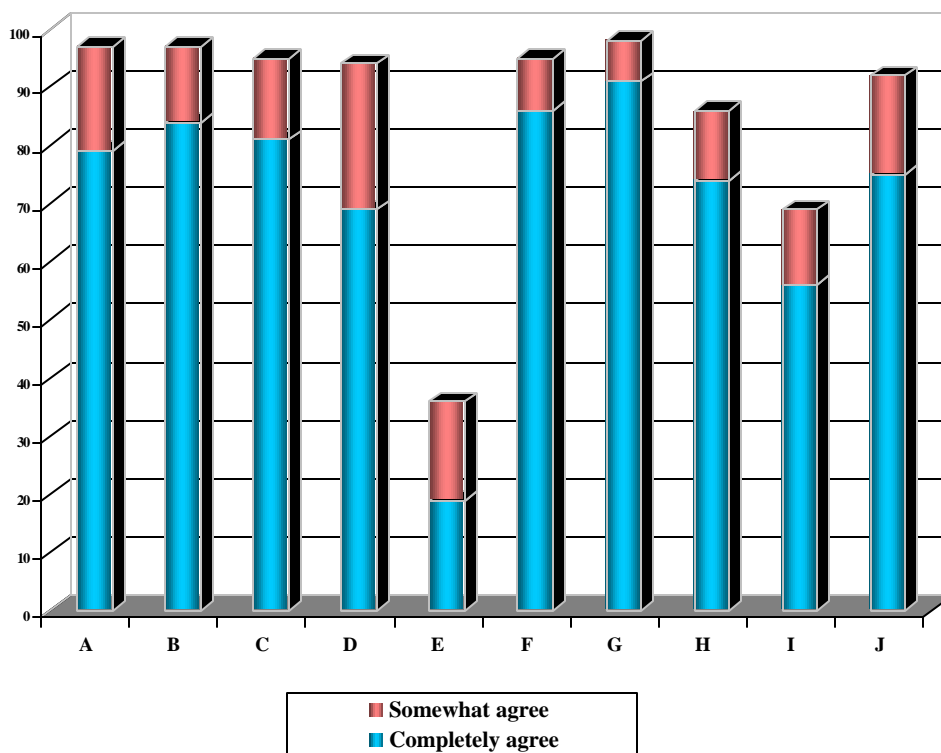
**Evaluation of Training**

Most election officials who took part in training before the 2002 election have positive evaluations of several aspects of the training and credit the training with helping them prepare for their roles during the 2002 election. In the survey, all election officials who received training were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements about the training. The statements are listed below.

- A. The education included all the issues I had to cover during the election process
- B. The education helped me understand my duties as an election official
- C. The materials provided during the education/training were very important in preparing for the elections
- D. The education/training was well organized
- E. The education/training should be shortened
- F. MEC members should be included in the education training to answer questions
- G. A complete polling kit should be used during the education training to demonstrate all materials and procedures
- H. There were enough materials for all participants in my education/training
- I. The invitations for participation in the education/training informed me about the length of the education/training
- J. The trainers were knowledgeable about the election process in Macedonia and were able to answer all our questions

The percentage of election officials who strongly or somewhat agree with the statements is presented in Figure 6.

**Figure 6. Attitudes toward Training (Percentage Who 'Completely' or 'Somewhat' Agree)**



*Now I will read several statements regarding the training. For each statement please tell me whether you completely agree with it, somewhat agree with it, somewhat disagree with it, or you completely disagree with it. (a-f, n=975; g-j, n=964)*

The following section describes the level of agreement expressed with each statement and any major differences among sub-groups of election officials.

**A.** More than three quarters (79%) of the officials completely agree that the training included all the issues they had to cover during the election process and an additional 19% somewhat agree with this statement. Only 4% of election officials disagree with this statement.

Ethnic Albanians (70%) and election officials from the Northwest (64%) are somewhat less likely than the national average (79%) to strongly agree with this statement. MEC members are even less likely to agree with this statement (53%, compared to 79% of EB members). The training was primarily geared toward EB members and this may explain the lower levels of approval among MEC members. This indicates a need for training specifically targeted at MEC members in future elections.

Election commission members nominated by the opposition party at the time of the election (which is now in power) are slightly more likely to strongly agree with the statement (85%) than those officials nominated by the ruling party at the time (76%).

**B.** A similarly high percentage of officials completely agree that the training helped them understand their duties as an election official (84%). Thirteen percent agree somewhat and 3% disagree with the statement.

Once again, officials nominated by opposition parties are more likely to completely agree with this statement (90%) than those nominated by the ruling party at the time of the elections (82%). And once again, there is a marked difference in opinions between EB and MEC members. While 85% of EB officials completely agree that the training helped them understand their duties as an election official, only 63% of MEC officials feel this way.

**C.** On another positive note, 81% of election officials who received training report that the materials provided during the training were very important in preparing them for the elections. Another 14% somewhat agree, while only 5% of officials do not agree with this statement.

Officials in the Northwest region of the country are least likely of all regions to completely agree (67%). The organizational difficulties in this part of the country alluded to earlier may have played a part in distribution of materials for the training.

**D.** Officials from the northwest are less likely to completely agree with this statement (56%) than officials from other regions.

**E.** More than a third of the election officials who participated in the training (36%) agree completely or somewhat that the training should be shortened. A majority of officials disagree with this statement, 15% somewhat and 48% completely. The fact that opinion on this statement does not differ markedly between those who agree the election was well organized and those who disagree indicates that some attention should be given to the length of the training.

**F.** Eighty-six percent of election officials completely agree that MEC members should be included in the training to answer questions. Nine percent agree somewhat while 4% disagree with this statement.

**G.** Almost all election officials completely (91%) or somewhat agree (7%) that a complete polling kit should be used during the training to demonstrate all materials and procedures. Hands-on training is considered an important part of the preparatory process for elections.

**H.** While there is overwhelming agreement that polling kits should be available during future trainings, there is less agreement as to whether adequate supplies were available for the training before the 2002 election. Seventy-four percent of officials completely agree that adequate supplies were available and 13% somewhat agree. Twelve percent of respondents do not agree with this statement.

The lack of adequate supplies during training impacts opinions on whether polling kits should be used during future trainings. Among those election officials who had adequate election supplies, 89% completely agree that election officials should be available in the future among those whose trainings had adequate supplies. Among those election officials who somewhat disagree that adequate supplies were available for the 2002 election, a majority (56%) completely agree that polling kits should be available in future trainings. Among those who completely disagree that adequate supplies were available, 45% completely agree with polling kits in the future. Those who feel that supplies for the 2002 training were inadequate may be concerned that they would be similarly impacted in future elections if polling kits become a key part of training. Election officials in the northwest (64% completely agree they had adequate supplies) may be most concerned.

**I.** There is also some dissatisfaction with the invitations sent out for the 2002 training. While a majority of election officials completely (56%) or somewhat (13%) agree that the invitations informed them about the length of the training, nearly a third of officials completely disagree (20%) or somewhat disagree (10%) with this statement.

**J.** There is general satisfaction with the trainers who implemented the 2002 election training. Seventy-five percent of election officials completely agree that the trainers were knowledgeable about the election process in Macedonia and were able to answer all their questions. Another 17% agree somewhat and 8% agree a bit or don't agree with this statement at all.

Election officials in the MEC are less likely to completely agree with this statement than EB members. Fifty-one percent of MEC members completely agree with the statement compared with 77% of EB members. This further illustrates the need for specific training for MEC officials in future elections.

### **Improvements to Training**

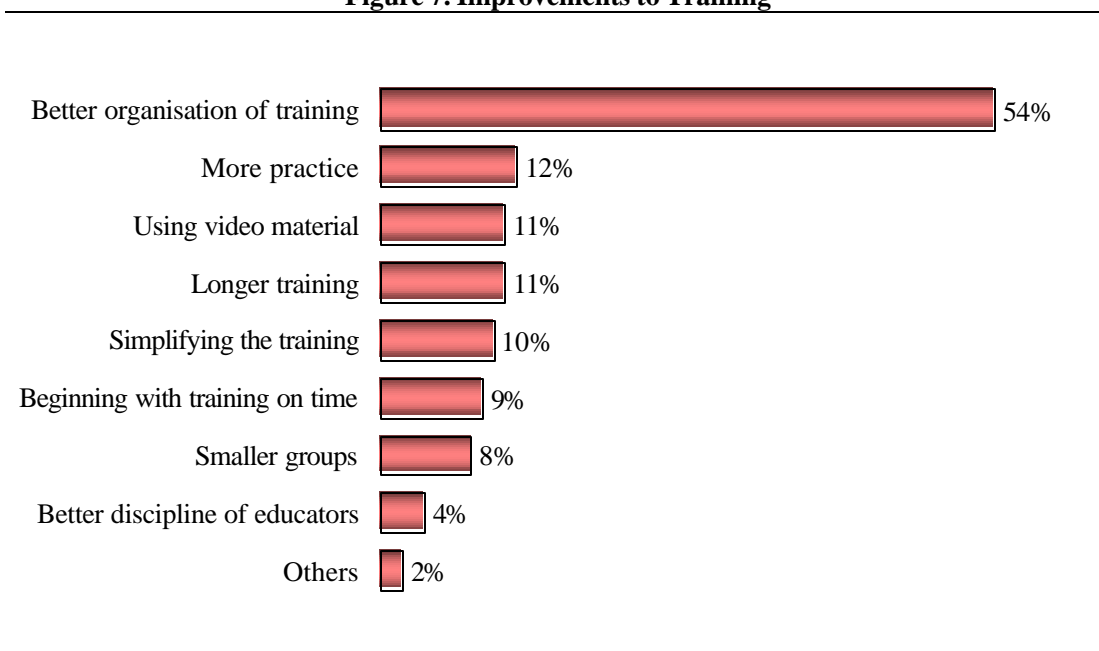
Given that most election officials in Macedonia have positive evaluations of all aspects of the training on which they were asked questions, it is not surprising that most of those who received training in 2002 do not feel that training could be improved (61%). However, a significant minority (39%) does feel that some improvements to election training are needed.

There is a significant split between members of higher election commissions and EBs on this question. While a majority of EB members (62%) feel that further improvements could not be made to the training, a majority of REC and MEC members (65%) think that improvements *can* be made to the training. As explained before, while MEC members were part of the training sessions for the 2002 election, the training was primarily geared toward EB members. This may explain the majority opinion among MEC members that the training can be improved.

It is somewhat surprising that ethnic Albanians, who tend to be more cautiously approving than ethnic Macedonians of aspects of the training, are more likely to say that training could not be improved (71%) than ethnic Macedonians (59%).

Figure 7 on the next page lists the improvement that election officials say could be made to training.

**Figure 7. Improvements to Training**



*“Do you think there are ways in which the training of the election bodies for the 2004 presidential and local elections could be improved? If yes, please state the changes you would recommend.” (n=349)*

Better organization of the training is the most often-cited improvement that could be made to training. Not surprisingly, those election officials who do not completely agree with the statement, “The training was well-organized,” are more likely to stress the need for better organization of training than those officials who completely agree that the training was well-organized. Ethnic Albanian officials are also more likely to mention this than officials of other ethnicities.

There is also a desire for more hands-on training. Twelve percent of election officials who think training can be improved think it can be done by using more video materials in training, and a further 11% think it can be improved by introducing more practice into the training sessions. Eleven percent would improve training by making training longer, while 9% would make sure the training sessions begin on time.

Other suggestions for improvement of training include simplifying the training to make it more understandable (10%) and holding the training in smaller groups (8%). This latter suggestion goes hand-in-hand with providing more hands-on practice to election officials during the training.

### **Compulsory Training**

Fully 89% of election officials believe that training should definitely be compulsory for all election officials before an election. A further 8% think that ‘maybe’ training should be compulsory for all election officials, while only 3% unequivocally state that training should not be compulsory for election officials. Those who received training for the 2002 election are much more unequivocal in their support of compulsory training (94% definitely) than those who did not receive training (74%). Perhaps the fact that they did not receive training for the last election and a fear that they may not do so for the next election makes certain election officials fearful of their eligibility to work in an election with compulsory training.

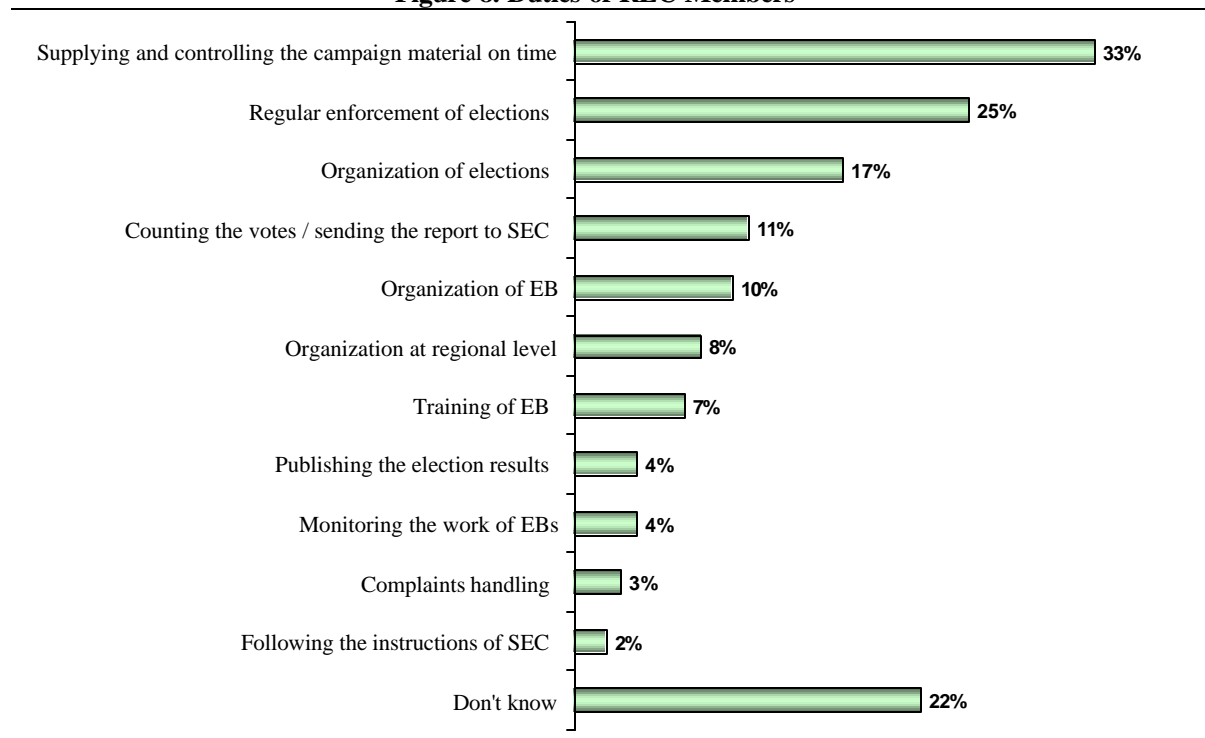
**III. DUTIES OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES**

Election officials were asked to describe the duties of REC, MEC, and EB members in Macedonia. The sections below provide brief descriptions of the responses.

**Duties of REC**

Figure 8 below describes the duties ascribed to the REC by election officials.

**Figure 8. Duties of REC Members**



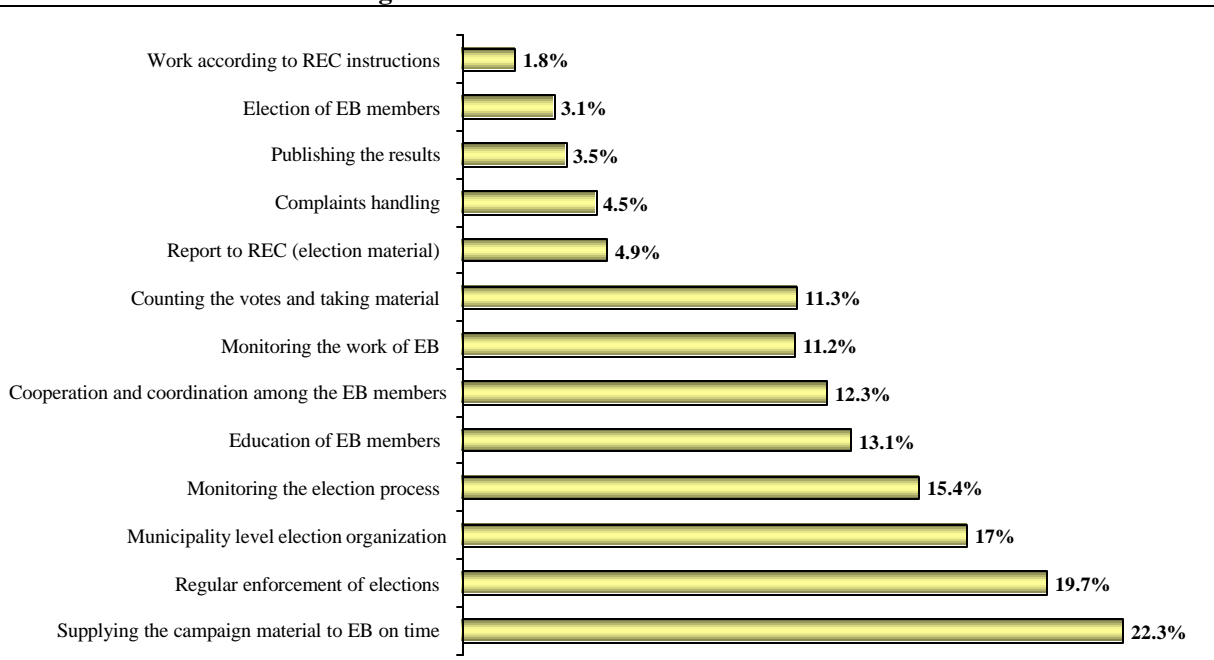
*“Please tell me the duties of the following members of election bodies. List as many as you like.”  
(n=1328)*

Twenty-two percent of election officials do not know the duties of the REC. This answer is more frequent than average among the youngest respondents (29.2%), compared to the eldest (16.5%), in Skopje (33.6%) and in the northwest of the country (32.6%), and among officials with the lowest level of education (30.8%). This opinion is also mentioned by close to a third of EB members. It is also noteworthy that of the duties listed, many are not the direct responsibility of the RECs. These include the organization and training of EBs. The combination of lack of knowledge of REC duties with the erroneous duties cited indicates that election officials, particularly at the EB level, should be more informed about the duties of RECs.

**Duties of MEC**

Figure 9 details the duties ascribed to the MEC by election officials in Macedonia. Both the mention of “Don’t know” and erroneous responses declines from the level observed for REC duties. Fifteen percent of election officials do not know the duties of MECs. Lack of knowledge is once again high for EB members, younger election officials, and officials in the northwest.

**Figure 9. Duties of MEC Members**

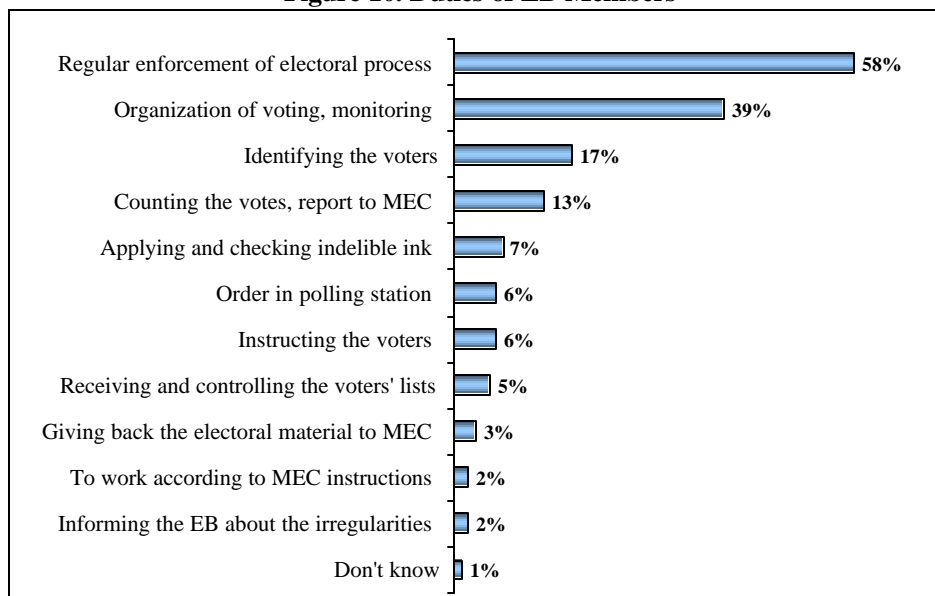


*“Please tell me the duties of the following members of election bodies. List as many as you like.”*  
(n=1328)

**Duties of EB Members**

Figure 10 lists the duties of EB members according to election officials. In this case, there is far less uncertainty about the duties of EBs (1% don't know) and the duties listed are generally accurate.

**Figure 10. Duties of EB Members**



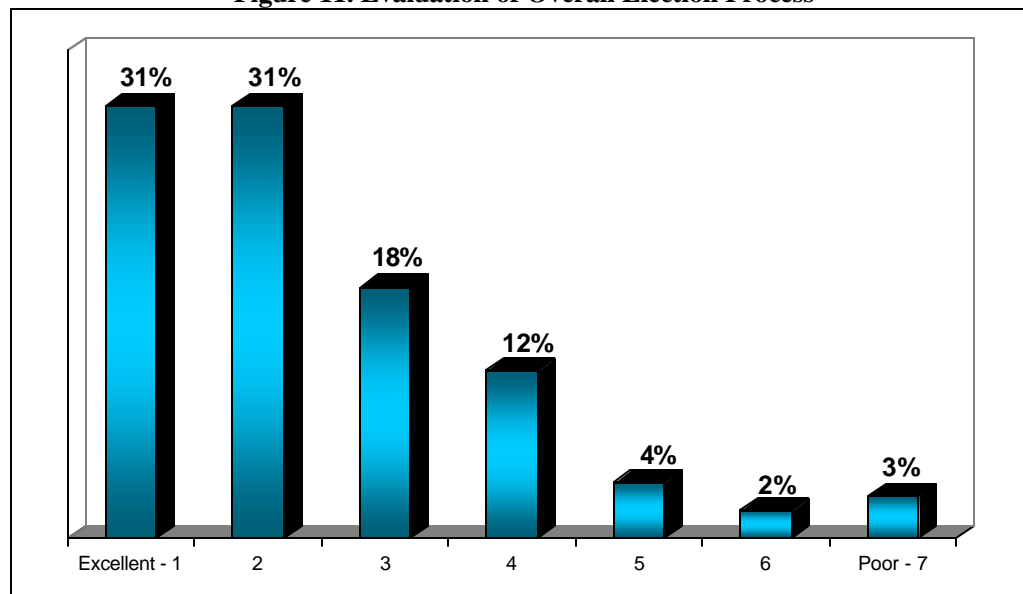
*“Please tell me the duties of the following members of election bodies. List as many as you like.”*  
(n=1328)

**IV. GENERAL OPINIONS OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES REGARDING 2002 ELECTION PROCESS**

**Overall Organization**

**Positive Opinions of 2002 Elections:** Similar to their attitudes about training received for the 2002 election officials, in general, have highly positive opinions and attitudes about the overall election process in 2002. Respondents were given a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 meant ‘excellent’ and 7 meant ‘poor’, and asked to evaluate the overall election process. The responses are shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11. Evaluation of Overall Election Process**



*“How would you rate the overall election process during the 2002 parliamentary elections?” (n=1,328)*

Eighty percent of election officials give the overall election process a positive rating, with 62% of officials giving the most positive ratings of 1 or 2...

A majority of all major sub-groups of election officials give a positive evaluation to the overall election process in 2002. The only discernible differences are in the intensity of the positive evaluation. For example, officials of Albanian ethnicity are less likely to rate the process as ‘excellent’ (23%) compared to ethnic Macedonian officials (34%).

Opinions on the election process also seem to be influenced by the outcome of the election. Election officials nominated by the coalition of parties that lost power after the election are far less likely to say that the overall process was ‘excellent’ (23%) compared to officials from the coalition of parties that gained power (43%). On the other hand, officials from the losing coalition are more likely to have negative opinions of the overall process (15%) than officials from the winning coalition (3%).

**Organization of 2002 Election Thought to be Better than Previous Elections:** Election officials were also asked how the organization of the 2002 election compared to the organization of previous elections in Macedonia. Ninety-four percent of officials believe that the 2002 elections were better organized than previous elections, with 57% stating that they were much better organized and 37% stating somewhat better organized. As with opinions on the overall organization of the 2002 election, ethnic Macedonian officials and those nominated by the winning party coalition display greater intensity in their approval. Sixty percent of ethnic Macedonian officials think the 2002 election was much better organized compared to previous elections, compared to 47% of ethnic Albanians. Seventy percent of officials from the

winning coalition of parties think the 2002 election was better organized than previous elections, compared to 46% of officials from the ruling coalition.

**Role of 2002 Election**

Election officials were asked their opinion on the 2002 parliamentary election and their relations to several socio-political developments. Officials were specifically asked whether the 2002 election contributed definitely, partially, or not at all to the following aspects of socio-political development in Macedonia:

1. Securing the future of democracy in Macedonia.
2. Developing closer relations between Macedonia and the Euro-Atlantic Community.
3. Promoting peaceful development of civil society.
4. Respecting the interests of all Macedonian citizens regardless of their ethnicity.

Responses to these questions are presented in Figure 12 below.

**Figure 12. Role of 2002 Election in Macedonian Socio-political Development**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Partially</b>	<b>Not At All</b>	<b>Election Not Relevant To Goal</b>
Elections helped in securing the future of democracy in Macedonia	45%	36%	15%	3%
Election helped in developing closer relations between Macedonia and the Euro-Atlantic Community	46%	36%	13%	3%
Elections helped in promoting peaceful development of civil society	56%	31%	11%	2%
Elections helped respecting the interests of all Macedonian citizens regardless of their ethnicity	64%	23%	11%	2%

*“Do you think the 2002 parliamentary elections helped in achieving...” (n=1328)*

Given the state of ethnic relations in Macedonia, it is encouraging to see that a majority of election officials (64%) think that the 2002 elections definitely helped to spur respect for the interests of citizens of Macedonia regardless of their ethnicity. A majority of both ethnic Macedonian (67%) and ethnic Albanian officials (53%) say that the 2002 election definitely helped in achieving this development.

Related to the respect of citizens of Macedonia, 56% of election officials think that the 2002 election definitely helped promote the peaceful development of civil society in Macedonia. Fifty-eight percent of ethnic Macedonian officials think the elections definitely promote peaceful development of civil society and 49% of ethnic Albanian officials echo this opinion.

**Opinions on Election Securing Democracy Colored by Partisan Affiliation:** Only 45% of officials think that the 2002 election definitely helped to secure the future of democracy in Macedonia. Given the central role elections play in the development of a democratic system, and given the generally positive



evaluation of the 2002 election by the officials, this finding is somewhat surprising. Further analysis of the data, however, reveals partisan affiliation to be the major determinant of opinions on this question and thus may indicate that the *outcome* rather than the actual conduct of the election plays a large part in the responses given to this question. Officials nominated by the winning coalition of parties are much more likely to credit the 2002 elections for securing the future of democracy in Macedonia (61% definitely, 34% partially) than officials from the losing coalition of parties (25% definitely, 35% partially, 33% not at all).

Even more instructive than the general breakdown of opinions according to party, is comparing responses to this question by party when controlling for opinions on the organization of the 2002 election. For example, we could compare the responses of those officials who think the overall organization of the 2002 election was excellent. Among these respondents, 71% of officials from the winning coalition think the elections definitely helped secure the future of democracy in Macedonia. This compares to 50% of officials from the losing coalition. Another example occurs comparing the responses among those officials who think the 2002 election was much better organized than previous elections. Among this group, 66% of officials from the winning coalition think the election definitely secured the future of democracy in Macedonia, compared to 40% of officials from the losing coalition.

### **Irregularities**

Consistent with the positive evaluation of the overall election process, few election commission members report hearing of or seeing any election irregularities on Election Day. Eight percent of officials saw irregularities on Election Day and 4% heard of irregularities. Election officials in the northwest were the most likely to have seen (12%) or heard of irregularities (10%). REC and MEC members were more likely to have heard of irregularities (16%) than EB officials (3%).

The most frequently cited irregularities were (n=166):

- Campaign materials/campaigning too close to the polling station (37%)
- Family voting/proxy voting (29%)
- Intimidation of voters (15%)
- Insufficient identification (14%)
- People being offered money or gifts to vote for somebody (11%)
- Voters' lists not updated (9%)

The most frequent action taken for these irregularities was the recording of the irregularity in the minutes (50%). Other frequent actions were to contact the MEC (16%) or the police (10%). In certain cases, the voter was removed from the polling station (10%). Ten percent of officials who heard of or saw irregularities do not know what action was taken to address the irregularity.

The election officials were asked to assess the effectiveness of various procedures used to protect the integrity of voting on Election Day. A majority of election officials found all of the measures used to be very effective:

- Voters marked with indelible ink (77% very effective, 18% somewhat effective)
- Voters asked to sign the Voters' List (82% very effective, 12% somewhat effective)
- Voters asked to show ID (94% very effective, 5% somewhat effective)
- No campaign material within 100 meters from the polling station (74% very effective, 15% somewhat effective)

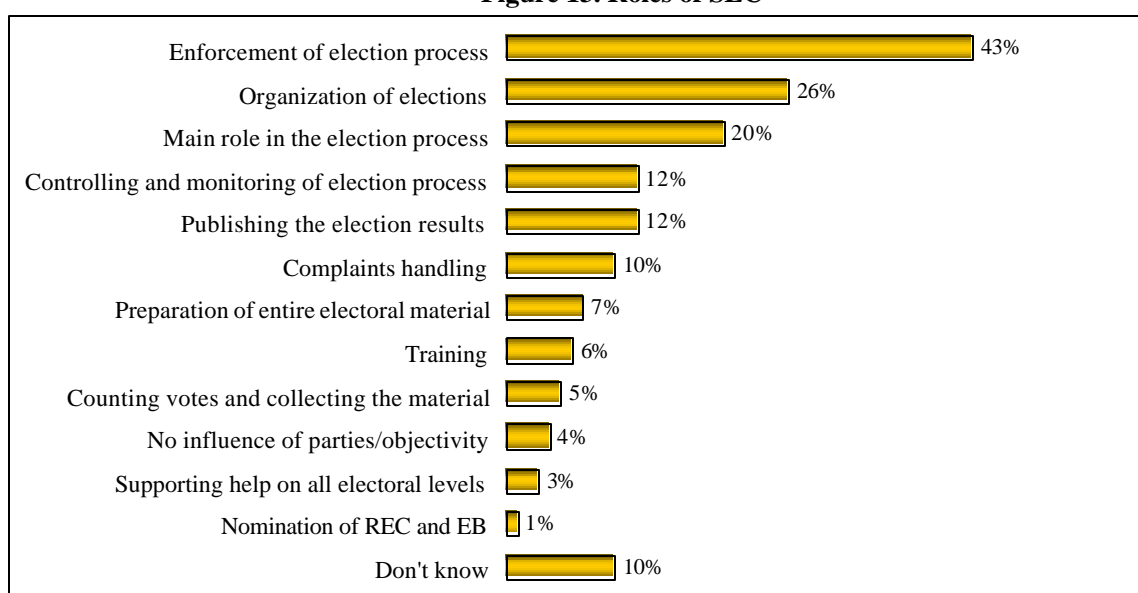
- No presence of unauthorized persons inside the polling station (82% very effective, 12% somewhat effective)

### Role of SEC in Election Process

The State Election Commission (SEC) played a pivotal role in organizing the 2002 parliamentary election in Macedonia and enforcing the election law throughout the election process, a role for which they were lauded by the international community. This section looks at the opinions of the election officials regarding the SEC and the role it played in the election process.

When asked to list the roles they think the SEC plays, election officials ascribe a range of duties to the members of the SEC. These roles are listed in Figure 13.

**Figure 13. Roles of SEC**



*“What is the role of the SEC in the election process in Macedonia?” (n=1328)*

The highest percentage of responses alludes to the SEC’s role as supreme organizer of elections in Macedonia. Some of the other responses point to functions that, while nominally under the control of the SEC, are often handled by lower level election commissions: training, counting of votes, preparation of election materials, and nomination of EBs.

Election officials were also asked to assess certain qualities of the SEC’s activities during the 2002 parliamentary election process. The highly positive evaluations of these qualities further document the outstanding performance of the SEC during the 2002 parliamentary elections.

**A majority of the election officials (90%) strongly or somewhat agree that SEC offered adequate assistance to all levels of election commissions during the 2002 elections.**

The intensity of agreement with this statement (those strongly agreeing) is somewhat lower in the northwest of the country and among officials of Albanian ethnicity.

**A majority of officials (90%) agree that the SEC strives to make its activities as transparent as possible for all election bodies in Macedonia.**

The intensity of agreement with this statement is somewhat higher among older officials, and grows also with the level of education. However, it is lower in the northwest of the country and among officials of Albanian ethnicity.

**Similarly, a majority of officials (95%) agree that the SEC should undertake primary responsibility for the training of election bodies in Macedonia.**

The intensity of agreement with this statement grows with the level of education, but it is lower in the northwest of the country.

**A majority of officials (84%) also agrees that SEC took all possible steps to fight against the irregularities and addressed complaints related to the 2002 parliamentary elections.**

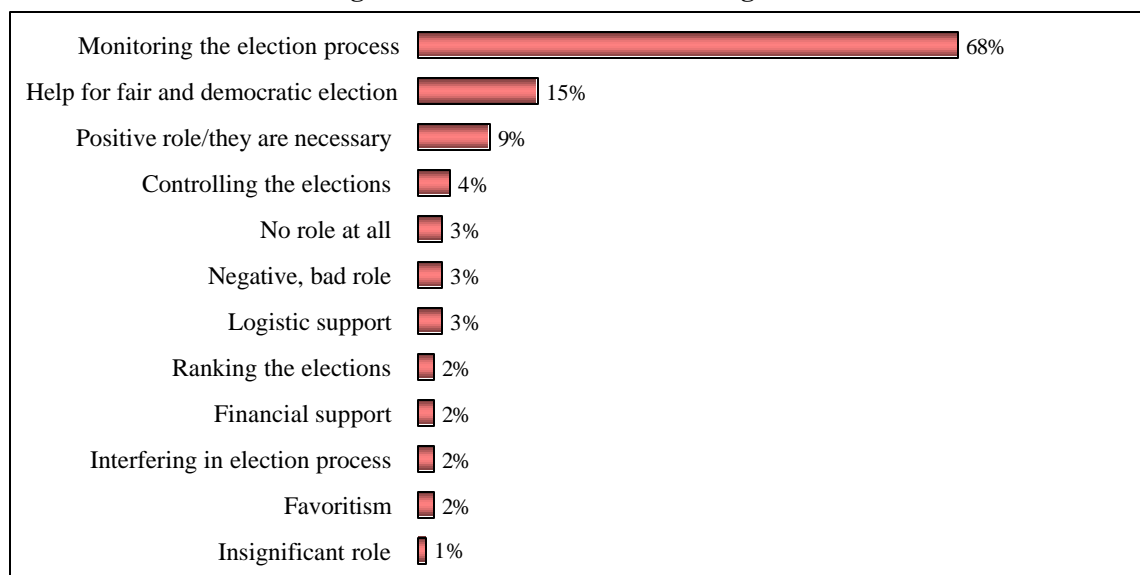
As would be expected, those who saw or heard of irregularities are more likely to disagree with this statement (27% and 19%, respectively).

### Role of International Community in Election Process

International organizations such as multilateral and bilateral assistance agencies and private organizations played a significant part during the 2002 parliamentary election process in Macedonia. These organizations provided technical and logistical assistance to all levels of election commissions in Macedonia, and played an observational and monitoring role to certify the legitimacy of the elections. This section examines the opinions of election officials about these international organizations and their perceptions of the role that the international organizations should play in future elections in Macedonia.

As Figure 14 demonstrates, election officials are mostly aware of the monitoring role played by international organizations during the 2002 parliamentary elections. Very few election officials are aware of the technical assistance provided to SEC and other electoral bodies by international organizations, as well as the logistical role played by the Logistical Support Officers (LSOs) provided by IFES Ltd.

**Figure 14. Role of International Organizations**



*“What was the role of the international community during the 2002 election process?” (n=1328)*

Only about 10% of officials have what can be termed negative perceptions of the role the international community played during the election. Besides a negative role, the other responses that shape this perception are: no role at all, interfering in the election process, favoritism, and insignificant role.

**Role of International Community Improved Election Process:**

When asked whether the role the international community played improved the election process in Macedonia, a majority of those asked the question (55%) feels that this role somewhat improved the election process. A further 30% feel that the role of the international community greatly improved the election process. Eleven percent of respondents feel that the role of the international community weakened the process.

A majority of both ethnic Albanian officials (98%) and ethnic Macedonian officials (82%) think the international community's role helped to improve the process. There is a wide disparity between members representing different parties. Ninety-four percent of those representing the winning coalition think the international community improved the election process, while this figure is 66% for those representing the coalition that lost office.

**Material and Technical Assistance Provided by International Community:**

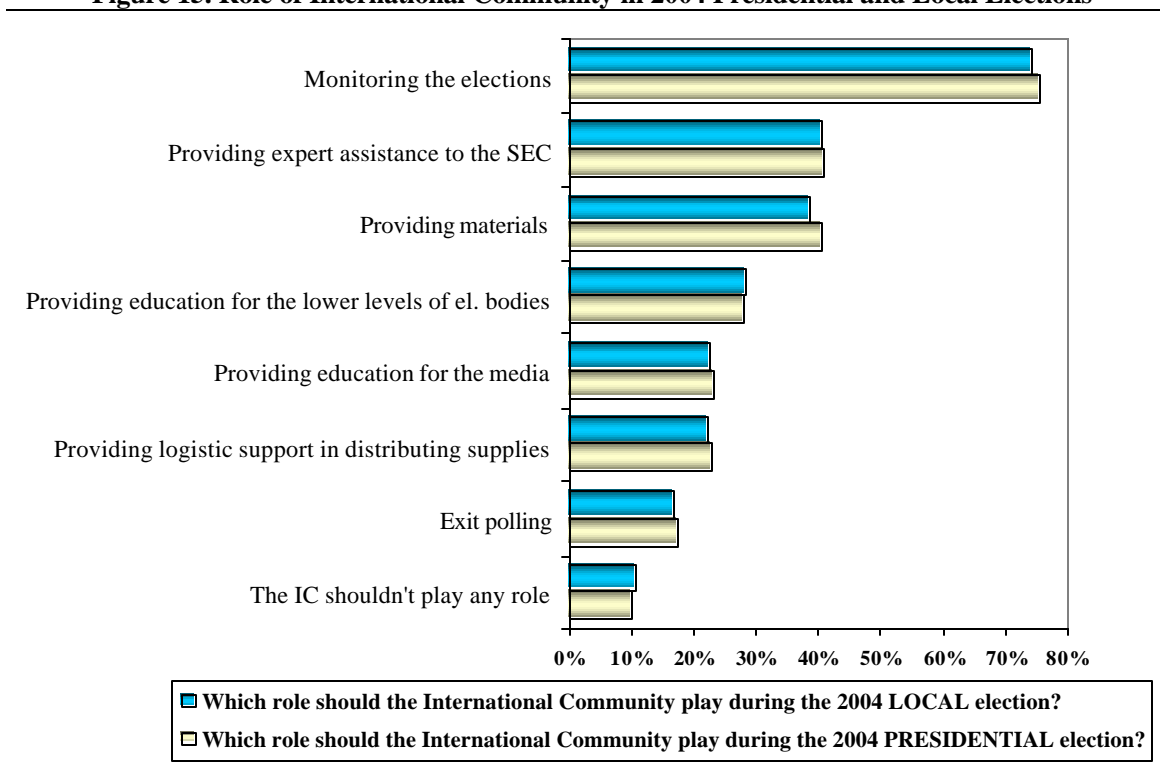
A majority of election officials believe that the international community provided at least some of the material and technical assistance for the 2002 election process. Twenty-eight percent of officials believe that the international community provided most of the assistance, while 33% believe it provided some of the assistance. Nine percent of officials think the international community provided little or no assistance.

Many election officials (30%) do not know how much assistance was provided by the international community. Those at the EB level are much more likely to not know the level of assistance (31%) than at the REC and MEC level.

**Role of International Community in 2004 Elections:**

Most election officials believe that the international community should play a role in monitoring the 2004 presidential and local elections in Macedonia. A significant percentage of officials also see a role for the international community in providing materials and expert assistance to the SEC, providing training for EB members and the media, as well as in logistical support and exit polling. The responses are listed in Figure 15.

**Figure 15. Role of International Community in 2004 Presidential and Local Elections**



*“What role do you think the International Community should play in the 2004 presidential (local) elections?” (n=1328)*

A few officials in each case (10%) do not want the international community to play any role in the election process for the presidential and local elections in 2004. This opinion is more frequent among ethnic Macedonian election officials (12%) and those officials nominated by the losing coalition of parties (20%).

As for exit polling, most officials who would like this tool used would like it to be 100m from the polling stations.

**Other Issues**

**Unauthorized Presence in Polling Stations:**

Election officials do not report much interference from unauthorized persons in their polling stations on Election Day. The few officials who did report interference mention threats, agitation at the polling stations, and intrusion of party members and media in the polling station.

**Method of Printing Ballots:**

For the 2002 parliamentary election, the SEC printed exactly as many ballots as the number of registered voters to lessen the risk of multiple voting. Election officials were asked whether they would prefer this method of printing ballots or whether this practice should be stopped because this precludes the SEC from addressing supply and distribution problems.

Officials overwhelmingly support the existing practice of printing exactly the same number of ballots as registered voters (82% strongly, 4% somewhat). Only 8% of officials think the existing practice should be stopped. This pattern of responses indicates that the supply and distribution of ballots was not a problem for the 2002 parliamentary elections.

## V. OPINIONS OF SPECIFIC ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES REGARDING 2002 ELECTION PROCESS

Officials from the REC, MEC, and EB were all asked questions specific to their responsibilities on this survey. This section covers the issues that were raised for each of the three levels of election commissions. The heading for each section denotes the number of interviews on which the percentages for most of the questions are based.

### **Electoral Board Members (n=1183)**

#### **Supplies Received on Time:**

Most EB members (92%) report that their polling station received the polling kits for their polling stations at least one day before Election Day. Similar timeliness of delivery is noted for voting screens and ballots (each 89%). Polling stations in the northwest are the only ones to have been significantly impacted by supply problems as between twenty and twenty-one percent of officials from this region report that they received the supplies on Election Day.

Only 2% of EB officials report that their polling station ran out of some supplies on Election Day, further indication of a smooth logistic operation for the election.

#### **Little Problem Cited with Contacting MECs:**

When asked whether it was easy or difficult for their EB president to contact their respective MECs, most EB officials (73%) reply that it was very or somewhat easy for their EB president to contact the MEC. Twenty percent reply that there was no reason to contact the MEC. Three percent reply that it was difficult to contact the MEC and 3% do not know. Those who cited problems contacting the MEC listed as reasons busy or unsecured phone lines and the unavailability of MEC members.

#### **Voter Understanding of Voting Process:**

Election officials do not report large problems among voters regarding the method of voting. Ninety-one percent of election officials report that all or most voters understood the voting process. Seven percent of officials indicate that approximately half the voters had trouble understanding the voting process, and 3% say that less than half of the voters at their polling station understood the process. The major problems cited were confusion with the use of voting equipment or voters coming to a polling station where they were not registered.

#### **Handicapped Access to Polls:**

Most election officials (62%) did not see handicapped voters having any trouble with access to the polling station or voting booths. Twenty-three percent of officials did not see any handicapped persons at their polling station. Twelve percent of election officials noticed 'some' or 'major' problems for handicapped persons. Problems for handicapped voters were noticed mostly in the northwest, north, and southwest.

Officials who report problems for handicapped voters think voting for these citizens can be improved by instituting voting in houses for the disabled, introducing special entrances for the disabled, providing transportation to and from the house for these voters, and by introducing a special election day for the disabled.

#### **Qualifications for EB President and Deputy President:**

Most EB officials (62%) think that a law degree should not be required for a person to become an EB president or deputy president. A substantial minority (34%) does think that EB presidents and deputy presidents should be lawyers. EB officials in Skopje are the least likely to want this requirement (23%) while those in the northwest are most likely to want the requirement (44%). EB presidents (29%) and deputy presidents (27%) are less likely than EB members (36%) and the deputy president (39%) to want this requirement.

**Party Membership:**

The majority of EB officials (85%) are members of political parties that appointed them to the commission. This is particularly true for ethnic Macedonian officials, 87% of whom are members of the party that nominated them. Party membership was not a factor that caused tensions in EBs during the election process. Ninety-three percent of EB officials do not think the fact that the party affiliations of their fellow EB members led to any tension during the election process. Non-party members are not any more likely to voice this sentiment than party members.

Many EB officials, however, do think that political parties have too much influence in the appointing of election officials in Macedonia. Thirty-nine percent of EB officials hold this opinion while 49% think that political parties have sufficient influence on the process. Only 10% of respondents believe that political parties have insufficient or no influence on the appointment process.

**REC Members (n=25)**

**Logistics:**

All but one of the REC members states that his/her REC successfully administered supplies to all the MECs for which the REC was responsible. Furthermore, 21 out of the 25 REC commissioners state that their REC did not have any logistical problems in distributing supplies to their MECs. Based on what the REC members report, RECs in Macedonia were responsible for administering supplies to average of eight MECs. Most of the REC members (21 out of 25) describe their REC's relationship with its subordinate MECs as being very good. The rest describe the relationship as somewhat good.

**Results Tabulation Equipment and Training:**

When asked whether their REC received computers in time to prepare for the tabulation of results for the 2002 election, nearly a third (32%) of REC members say this was not the case. Further, 16 out of the 25 REC members report that neither they nor any other member of their REC was provided with training on the use of the computers for results tabulation. This is mentioned by all REC members in the northwest. Of the nine members who received the training, seven feel that it was sufficient to prepare them for results tabulation for the election. Timely and accurate publication of results builds confidence in the electoral process and for this reason, the lack of equipment and training for results tabulation is a serious concern that should be remedied before the presidential election in 2004.

**Relationship with SEC and Logistics Support Officers:**

Most REC members describe their relationship with the SEC as being very good (18 out of 25), while a few describe it as being somewhat good (6 out of 25).

IFES Ltd. provided forty-one Logistics Support Officers (LSOs) for the election process in order to smooth logistical arrangements between the various election levels of election commissions in Macedonia. These LSOs worked closely with RECs and MECs. REC members were asked whether the LSOs had improved the effectiveness of the cooperation between different levels of election commissions. Ten out of twenty-five REC members feel that cooperation was greatly improved due to the LSOs, another ten feel that it was somewhat improved, and four feel that it did not improve much.

**MEC Members (n=120)**

**Logistics:**

Most MEC members (74%) report that their MECs did not have difficulties distributing supplies to polling stations in their municipality. Twenty-three percent did report problems. The percentage of MEC members reporting problems was highest in the northeast (40%) and southeast (29%), while it was the lowest in Skopje (7%). The primary problem in trying to distribute supplies to EBs was the inaccessibility of some EBs.

Almost all of the MEC members (96%) report that their MEC was provided with sufficient supplies for distribution to polling stations by their REC. Somewhat fewer MEC members (84%) report that they received sufficient supplies from the REC to conduct training for the EB members in their municipality. This is less frequent in the northwest where seven of the 16 MEC members report that they did not

receive sufficient supplies for training from their REC. This may account for relatively fewer election officials who received training in the northwest.

**Relationship with EBs, REC, and LSOs:**

Most MEC members (71%) think that the relationship between their MEC and the EBs in their municipality was very good. Twenty-four percent believe that it was somewhat good. Compared to the rest of the country, a smaller percentage in Skopje (53%) thinks that relationship between their MEC and EBs was very good.

MEC members are not as highly positive about the relationship between their MEC and REC. Fifty-six percent think that the relationship between their MEC and REC was very good, while 30% believe it was somewhat good. Ten percent of MEC members describe this relationship as somewhat or very bad.

MEC members are also less sanguine about the impact of the LSOs on the effectiveness of cooperation between different levels of election commissions in Macedonia. Thirty-two percent of MEC members think the LSOs greatly improved the effective cooperation between the election commissions, while 43% feel it was somewhat improved. Seventeen percent of MEC members think the LSOs did not improve the effectiveness much or at all. MEC members in the northwest are the most pessimistic, with 31% saying the LSOs did not improve effectiveness much or at all.



## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

International and multilateral bodies lauded the 2002 parliamentary elections in Macedonia for having been conducted in an efficient and impartial manner. The election was generally seen to have been free and fair, allowing each and every voter in Macedonia with an equitable chance to choose their representative in parliament. As the findings in this report make clear, this view is also shared by most election officials in Macedonia:

- A majority of election officials at all levels have highly positive opinions and attitudes about the overall election process in 2002. Eighty percent of election officials give the overall election process a positive evaluation. An even greater percentage of officials, 94%, believe that the 2002 elections were better organized than previous elections in Macedonia.
- In addition to providing highly positive evaluations of the election process itself, most election officials think that the election played a significant social role. A majority of election officials think that the election process respected the rights of citizens of Macedonia regardless of ethnicity; helped in promoting the peaceful development of civil society; developed closer relations between Macedonia and the Euro-Atlantic community; and helped in securing the future of democracy in Macedonia.
- The 2002 election is judged to have been remarkably fair. Few election officials report seeing or hearing of any irregularities on Election Day, and those that did report irregularities mention that, for the most part, proper procedures were undertaken to address the irregularities. The most commonly cited irregularities were campaigning too close to the polling station (37%) and family/proxy voting (29%). Most election officials also report that the measures used by the SEC to ensure a fair process were effective in achieving their goals.
- Nearly three-quarters of election officials report receiving training for their duties for the parliamentary elections in 2002. Most election officials who took part in training have positive evaluations of several aspects of the training and credit the training with helping them prepare for their roles during the election. This is all the more impressive when one considers that this was the first-ever election official training carried out in Macedonia.
- There is general satisfaction with the trainers who implemented the 2002 election training. Seventy-five percent of election officials completely agree that the trainers were knowledgeable about the election process in Macedonia and were able to answer all their questions. The general satisfaction with the training and trainers is one reason why an overwhelming majority would like training to become mandatory for all election officials before an election.
- The survey also indicates that logistical arrangements for the election were generally of top quality. More than three-quarters of EB officials report that their polling stations received supplies and materials well in time for Election Day, and these supplies and materials were sufficient so that there were no shortages on Election Day. Members of the different election commissions report generally good relations among the different commissions, a finding which is underscored by the relative lack of logistical problems before and during the election.
- The international community was found to have played a critical and constructive role in the election process. Logistical Support Officers (LSOs) provided by IFES Ltd. played a key role in facilitating smooth logistical arrangement between the different levels of election commissions. Their role was appropriately noted by REC and MEC members, more than three-quarters of who say that the LSOs greatly or somewhat improved the cooperation between election commissions. More than 80% of all election officials say that the role of the international community improved the electoral process in Macedonia.

- The results of the opinion survey of election officials show that 91% of them report that all or almost all voters understood the voting process, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the SEC voter education campaign.

The 2002 parliamentary elections in Macedonia exceeded the standards in the region and were a great overall success. However, this survey does point to minor issues, which should be addressed for future elections by all of the actors responsible for election administration in Macedonia.

- More women should be encouraged to become members of election commissions. For the 2002 parliamentary elections, the proportion of women members was far less than their proportion of the overall population. At the same time, women members were generally better educated than their male peers. The inclusion of more women in election bodies will help to promote the general inclusion of women in all aspects of social and political life in Macedonia.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that officials at all levels receive training for future elections. Those who did receive training had overwhelmingly positive opinions of the training and felt that it aided them considerably in learning their duties for the election. Some other recommendations with regard to training:
  - The SEC and others responsible for training should consider separate training sessions for officials at the EB and MEC levels.
  - At the same time, thought should be given to including MEC members as key participants in training of EB officials.
  - Greater efforts should also be made to have REC members fully trained on results tabulation, and REC offices equipped with computers for results tabulation in a timely manner.
  - A special emphasis should be placed on training first-time officials as a significant percentage of these officials did not receive training for the 2002 election.
  - Future training should incorporate more hands-on tools such as complete polling kits, practice, and videos.
  - Many EB officials do not know the roles played by the REC and MEC in the election process. Future training for these officials should emphasize an explanation of the roles of the REC and MEC in the election process.
  - Emphasis should be placed on developing flexible training plans so that the maximum possible number of election officials are trained. This will be especially critical if training is made a mandatory requirement for election officials.
- While election officials have generally positive opinions of the role that the international community played during the election, they have an incomplete understanding of this role. Most election officials are only aware of the monitoring and observation role of the international community, and not of the technical assistance provided by international organizations such as IFES. This should be clearly communicated to election officials so that they can properly gauge and value the contributions of the international community during the next election cycle.
- While it does not specifically fall into the immediate purview of the SEC and other election officials in Macedonia, efforts should be made to reduce the partisan polarization of opinions toward the election process. The survey data shows significantly varying opinions on many facets of the election between officials from those parties that lost the election and those that won the election. This atmosphere could be harmful for the successful development of democracy in Macedonia and should be stemmed in its most visible exercise, voting. Maximum efforts

should be made to convince all election officials that the election process is impartial and does not favor one party or the other. This should also be reinforced by the actions of election bodies in Macedonia.

- Efforts should be made to reduce instances of family/proxy voting, campaigning on Election Day, as well as other possible irregularities in future elections. One of the best approaches would be to address these issues through intense voter information and education campaigns.
- Comprehensive voter education is a critical element in running successful elections, and therefore this practice must be continued in the future.

## VII. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Information about IFES Macedonia

#### Background

IFES began working in Macedonia in 1994 when it sent a pre-election assessment team to Skopje to evaluate the election environment and provide recommendations for how the international community could best assist Macedonia in its democratic transition.

Since July 2000 IFES has been the primary international election assistance provider to the Government of Macedonia and the State Election Commission (SEC). IFES has worked closely and effectively with the SEC, Ministry of Justice, other state and non-state bodies, and the international community to establish a workable election administration structure; prepare effective election legislation; and heighten public awareness of the electoral process. Many of the activities carried out reflect first steps towards best practices in the field of election administration. Collectively, they have also contributed to the increased transparency of democratic institutions and political processes in Macedonia.

#### Current Programming

The international community identified the parliamentary elections as one of the greatest successes in Macedonia in 2002. At the request of the SEC and with the support of USAID, IFES continues to assist this body with its institutional development. In addition, IFES partnered with the Civil Association OXO in early 2003 to implement a project to promote an understanding of the role of Parliament. OXO prepared electronic and written materials for airing and distribution to the public. The “My Parliament” video was aired on several television stations beginning in April 2003.

In January 2003, IFES and the SEC co-sponsored an election seminar. This provided local and international experts and practitioners an opportunity to review key elements of the 2002 elections with a view towards strengthening the legal and administrative framework for future elections.

At the request of the SEC, IFES assisted the SEC in the conduct of special mayoral elections in five municipalities in May 2003. IFES provided assistance in the areas of voter education, training and election operations. Domestic observers reported that, “the elections were conducted in a quiet, fair and democratic atmosphere without incidents.”

These activities have provided important information for the SEC as it prepares for the challenges it faces in advance of 2004 local and presidential elections. With the assistance of USAID, IFES will continue its assistance to ensure that local and presidential elections in 2004 are well organized and administered and free and fair, and to build indigenous capacity to effectively administer future elections. Priority areas for electoral reform in advance of 2004 local and presidential elections are SEC institutional development; election law reform; training of election officials; voter education; and local resource development.

