

nominated according to the same formula as the DEC. The winners of the majoritarian contests will be announced at each DEC.

The SEC has been the target of criticism by opposition parties and journalists. In an editorial entitled "The SEC, C'est Moi", the Skopje daily *Dnevnik* accused the SEC of practising old-style politics and operating with excessive secrecy. The SEC has missed a number of important electoral deadlines, which only heightens tensions between the parties and the supreme electoral body. The posting of the candidate lists was five days late; the descriptions of the election units were seven days late; and the posting of the polling stations was two days late.⁵ Moreover, the continued lack of SEC responsiveness to party inquiries contributes to overall distrust in the system.

C. Drawing Boundaries between Electoral Districts

Ethnic Albanian political parties have accused the government of deliberately drawing the boundaries between electoral districts in such a way as to dilute the voting strength of their natural supporters. Moreover, their charge is, in part at least, well founded since constituencies which are predominantly comprised of ethnic Albanians have on average some 20,000 voters, whereas, constituencies which are predominantly comprised of ethnic Macedonians tend to average 16,000 voters. This effectively means that a vote cast by an ethnic Macedonian is worth more than that cast by an ethnic Albanian. Under the *Law for Electoral Districts*, there can be "minus 10 percent to plus 10 percent" of the average number of voters in the districts. Given that the number of registered voters is 1,572,976 and there are only 2,973 polling stations, this margin could have been set lower in order to minimise the variance between populations in constituencies.

D. Voter Registration and Identification Card

Two procedural improvements have been made to the voting process, which should introduce greater transparency and increase party confidence. The voter register has been made available to political parties for review and voter identification cards issued.

Political parties may now check the voter register for accuracy. As in previous polls, there have been numerous complaints that voter lists are inaccurate or have been deliberately tampered with by the government. This suspicion was heightened when the SEC failed to meet the deadline for closing voter lists and distributing them to political parties. Political parties had until 27 September 1998 to request copies of the final voter register. According to the law, the

⁵ *Dnevnik*, 30 September 1998.