



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities

**Placing the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of diverse societies in
context: an initial discussion**

Address by
by
Knut Vollebaek

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

at a meeting with civil society on the Ljubljana Guidelines
on Integration of diverse societies.

[Check against delivery]

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Dear participants,

Integration of society is a challenge for all States in the OSCE area. It is perhaps even more so in countries like this one that are going through the early stages of transition and democratization, when institutions are weak and nationalist mobilization strong. It is my experience that in such cases, the risk of different ethnic groups building parallel, enclosed societies with limited interaction and co-operation across ethnic lines is more acute.

This is why I am glad that today, we can discuss *The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies*, which were published some months ago. In many respects, these Guidelines represent the lessons learned through two decades of active conflict-prevention work by my Institution throughout the OSCE area.

The Ljubljana Guidelines are the seventh thematic Recommendations issued by my Institution and they build on previous Recommendations, such as *The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities*, *The Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities* and *The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life* – which were primarily aimed at elaborating and enhancing minority rights in the areas of education, language and participation in public life. They also reflect developments both within the OSCE area and in the accumulated experience of my Institution.

The first HCNM's main challenge and highest priority was to secure basic minority rights. As time progressed, the inter-State aspects of minority policy became more prominent in the work of my Institution, which led to the development of *The Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations*. Today, with the Ljubljana Guidelines, we address the issue of integration as a key to facilitating security and stability both within and between States.

Through my work, I have learned that recognition and accommodation of minority culture, identity and political interests, although necessary, may not be sufficient to build lasting peace and stability. It is essential to develop and support an integration process to prevent

societies from becoming divided along ethnic lines. Such a division poses challenges to the stability and viability of any multi-ethnic State.

As I had the opportunity to highlight yesterday during a lecture at the South Eastern European University in Tetovo, the process towards integration involves meeting the basic responsibilities that sovereignty entails. Meeting these basic responsibilities helps provide security for citizens, protect human rights and ensure good and effective governance.

The relationship between minority rights and integration is often debated. In this country, the Ohrid Framework Agreement [OFA] has been much celebrated – and rightly so – for providing a comprehensive foundation for implementing minority rights. The OFA has played an essential role in securing peace and it is still needed. Yet, more than a decade after its adoption, additional responses are required to tackle the deep divisions in society.

Lack of integration is often presented as the unwillingness of some individuals to be part of society. It is not the minority's duty to take on the full burden of integration by accepting the norms of the majority. The integration process is meant to benefit society as a whole. This is why I prefer to talk about integration *of* society rather than integration of *a particular group into* society.

Integration should be seen as complementary to rather than incompatible with minority rights. In my view, minority rights are part and parcel of a successful integration policy. Nonetheless, we have to accept that recognizing minorities' identities and respecting minority rights may not be enough to build a secure multi-ethnic State. I believe that this is the precise challenge that this country is facing more than ten years after the OFA.

I have continuously warned the Government of this country about the growing ethnic divisions in this society during the last six years of my mandate. I have called on the Government to address the root causes of these divisions and not to concentrate only on the symptoms. Warning about potential conflict risks, but also proposing early actions that could diffuse tensions, lies at the core of my mandate.

My efforts to convince the Government to develop and adopt an Integrated Education Strategy were part of this rationale: how can you develop a shared sense of belonging to a

single State if pupils are taught different histories of that State? How can you build a cohesive society if there are no opportunities for pupils to constructively interact with each other in and outside the classroom? How can you reconcile the two main ethnic groups of the country when they see each other as opponents and view one's gain as the other's loss?

I am glad that we can engage in discussions on how we can use these Guidelines to promote integration of society. I am aware that the road to integration is long but it is a road we must follow if we are convinced that increased separation casts a shadow on the long-term stability of the country.

We are joined here today by some very knowledgeable experts who will place the issue of integration in context. Our first speaker, Ms. Katarina Kolozova, will help set the stage for our discussion by shedding light on how the very notion of integration may be introduced in public discourse in this country.

Our second speaker, Ms. Mirjana Maleska, will talk about how linguistic policy can enhance social integration rather than be a source of divisions.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you all for coming. I believe that you have an important role to play in facilitating the integration of this society.

I hope that together we can think practically how integration can be debated and promoted in a divided society like this one. I would like to encourage you to express your views and perhaps disagreements and I look forward to our discussion.