

## ASSOCIATION FOR CULTURAL INTERACTION

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### 2012 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

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#### *Working session 13*

#### **Right of reply:**

#### **Written statement in the exercise of the right of reply to the statement of the Bulgarian Delegation regarding education in mother language in public schools in Bulgaria**

The Association for Cultural Interaction would like to stress that the current Bulgarian legislation declares and guarantees the democratic right to study the mother tongue in Constitution, through ratification of international legal acts, and in existing laws on education, but the practical decrees, regulations and other normative acts do not make it clear how to actually organise the teaching of the mother tongue. Currently such classes are organised in the frame of the existing legislation only through personal efforts and engagement of headmasters, teachers, regional experts and parents.

According to the Regulation for Implementation of the Public Education Act, students whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian, can learn their mother tongue in municipal schools in accordance with the state education requirement for the level of schooling, the general educational minimum, and the curriculum. It should be noted that the general educational minimum is the volume of knowledge that under Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Curriculum Act should be achieved within the framework of the mandatory school preparation. The Regulation defines the mother language as the language a child uses to communicate in the family.

For the present the Minister of Education has not yet issued the state education standards for the mother language curriculum, despite being obliged to do so by the Public Education Act. A result of such inaction is an ambiguous legal situation. On the one hand, the mother tongue education has to correspond to the state education standards, while on the other, there are no such standards. This leads to legal elusiveness and uncertainty concerning the right to study the mother language, which is unacceptable in a state governed by the rule of law.

As regard the textbooks, they are too old and the subject has not been renewed during the past 20 years. The pupils learn their mother language with textbooks that have been published in 1992/1993. Their content is outdated, and the books themselves are worn out to the point of falling apart.

According to the statistical data in the 1992/93 school year 114,000 pupils were learning mother language. Since then, their number has been progressively decreasing at a rate of several thousand per school year. For example, in 2005/06 they were reduced to 25,191 pupils, in 2009/10 to 15,000, and in 2011/12 school year, as the representative of Bulgarian Delegation stated, they were only 11,055.

Above mentioned problems around studying mother tongue in public schools are only few. There are much normative and organisational vagueness that cause decreasing of the number of the students who chose mother tongue in the schools. In addition to the normative obstacles and inaction of the state and municipal institutions, there are also various objective reasons for the decline in learning of mother tongue. I would like to refer to the research of International Minority and Intercultural Center on this issue (<http://www.imir-bg.org>).