

18 September 2017

Dear Mr. Moderator,

The most important part of the policy for the development of tolerance is the support of educational projects of national and religious minorities. Today this is the only one remedy for the self-isolation, allowing for social cohesion and guaranteeing state control over socio-cultural changes among minorities.

Today, even countries traditionally adhering to the policy of non-interference in the affairs of religious minorities and just denying the existence of ethnic minorities, began to understand this. That is for example France. In this country, in 2016, the State "Islam Freedom Foundation" was established. Its goal is the training of imams in French with the teaching of the basics of French culture. Until then, all Islamic communities had been financed by public and private funds of the countries of the Arab East and Turkey. This created problems, both in terms of security and in terms of the perception of French Muslims by non-Muslims.

Equally important is the support of educational programs aimed at fostering tolerance among broad sections of the population, especially young people. Here I want to give two examples - the Riga Ghetto Museum in Latvia and the "Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center" in Russia. Both are created on the basis of Jewish communities - the community "Shamir" in Riga and the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia (FJCR) in Moscow.

The museum in Riga was created exclusively on the enthusiasm of the members of the community and with undoubted support of the city and the State, since the land and building in the center of the city were transferred to the use of the Museum. Clearly, moral support of State structures is also evident. The Riga Ghetto Museum has a number of educational programs for a wide range of students, both children and youth, and teachers specializing in teaching the history of the Holocaust. Every day children's training groups for representatives of all religions and ethnoses work. For five years, the program of scientific and practical conferences on the history of the Holocaust has been implemented. This year the program "Riga Forum" was started. This is the first experience of combining two important topics in the study - the history of the Holocaust and the contemporary aspects of radicalism. Actually this was the first topic of the Forum - "The Holocaust and Modern Radicalism". Thus, a great contribution was made to overcoming the negative trend of turning the history of the Holocaust into a scholastic discipline. More than 60 researchers and experts from 15 countries of the World took part in the first Riga Forum.

The Museum of Tolerance in Moscow is a project of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, established on the basis of the Moscow Jewish Community Center. Several tens of millions of dollars were invested in the project. The project began when I was a Vice-President of FJCR in the beginning of 2000-th years. Today it is the largest Jewish museum in the world and the largest indoor exhibition area in Europe: an exhibition area of 4,500 m², a total area of 8,500 m². Excellent technical equipment makes it one of the most technologically advanced museums in the World. The exposition of the museum is based not only on artifacts, but also on information submitted in an interactive form. This allows the visitor to get involved in the research process. Visiting the museum is included in the school programs of tolerance education. By the way the programs themselves were created jointly with UNESCO. In 2016, the Center for Tolerance of the Jewish Museum became a laureate of the UNESCO Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence

I appeal to the OSCE to study the experience of these two institutions in order to spread best practices in other European countries.

Dr. Valery Engel, ECDD President