

Right of reply by Romania

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 8: Tolerance and Non discrimination

Mr. Moderator,

Romania exercises the right of reply with regards to the intervention of the NGO *Mikó Imre Association for the Protection of Minority Rights*. As a general remark, I point out that its allegations are simply not true and we strongly reject them. Now, I would like to briefly underline 5 aspects:

- 1) Regarding the use of minority languages in the local public administration, Romania has a comprehensive legal framework. The Law on Public administration contains a number of important provisions meant to ensure the exercise of the right of the use of one's mother tongue. I would only enumerate a few: in the territorial-administrative units where citizens belonging to national minorities represent at least 20% of the total population, the local authorities, public institutions under their coordination and other public services will also ensure, in their relation with these citizens, the use of their mother tongue. Decisions of normative nature are also made public in the mother tongue of those minorities, whereas the individual decisions are communicated, upon request, in the mother tongue of minorities. In those territorial-administrative units, the local authorities must ensure bi or multilingual inscriptions. It must be emphasized, that, based on the decision of local authorities, the use of the mother tongue in the local public administration can be ensured even if the percentage of 20% is not reached.
- 2) As of the right to express in the mother tongue before the courts of law, persons belonging to national minorities in Romania do enjoy fully this right. In case all parties request or agree to express in their mother tongue, the court has to ensure the exercise of that right, as well as the proper administration of justice with the respect of the principles of contradictory, oral and public proceedings. Also, in case one or several parties request to express themselves in their mother tongue, the court has to ensure, free of charge, the use of an interpreter or an authorized translator.

- 3) Regarding funding, I won't expand on data, but only underline that, through the Department for Interethnic Relations, the Romanian State financially supports the non-governmental organizations of the national minorities of the Council of National Minorities, which allows the promotion of the interethnic dialogue and the preservation of the ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic identity of national minorities in Romania. Apart from the fix amount of money annually distributed to the representative organisations of the national minorities, there is an important financial allocation through the Department for Interethnic Relations for various projects meant to promote inter-ethnic dialogue and the national identity of persons belonging to any of the 20 national minorities living in Romania. Information can be accessed on the webpage of the DRI. At the same time, important financing for projects relevant for the protection of religious and cultural identity of persons belonging to national minorities is ensured through the Ministry of Culture and National Identity and through the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs.
- 4) The constitutional control exercised by the Constitutional Court is legally guaranteed for the indicated entities and by no means can one say that it's being exercised on ethnic grounds. In the context, I remind that the President of Romania belongs to the German minority.
- 5) As for the international Reports, I invite any interested state or entity to consult the web site of the Council of Europe where the Government comments are publicly available.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator