

INTERVENTION

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Republic of Moldova

AGENDA ITEM 5: Challenges and problems encountered in the practical implementation of the Declaration

Thank you Madame Chair,

My name is Victoria Apostol and I will make my intervention on the behalf of Promo-LEX Association which is human rights NGO from the Republic of Moldova.

The history of minority groups in the Republic of Moldova becomes visible only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The disappearance of the Soviet Union led to the recognition of Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Gagauzian minorities within Moldova's territory. These minority groups represent the main visible linguistic minorities in Moldova. In practice, only Russian and Gagauzian minorities benefit from an education system which allows them to study in their mother tongue while the Ukrainians, Bulgarians and other minorities are forced to study in the Russian language. In our country Ukrainians represents 8, 4%, while Russians represents 5, 9%. Based on these data we can observe that Ukrainians are more numerous than Russians, but they do not enjoy the same opportunities to study in their language. This aspect contributes to diminishing the relevance of their own language and to the loss of their specific characteristics as a minority. In this context, it is also important to emphasize the situation in Transnistrian region, which is even more complicated regarding linguistic minorities. In the Transnistria region the Romanian community represents the largest part of the population, 31,9%, and are alongside Ukrainians, Poles and Bulgarians, facing difficulty in exercising their right to education in their mother tongue and are obliged to renounce their identity and language if they are to be integrated in the region.

We recognize that the Moldova government has succeeded in adopting several national laws which address minority issue and have ratified a number of international and regional conventions¹ on human rights most relevant to minorities, such as the CoE FCNM (*Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 1995*). However the implementation of these provisions still remains the weakest aspect of the Moldova's domestic legislation. The government adopted three laws which aim to create the necessary space for using minority languages, but these laws were adopted in 1989 and never renewed to take into account the Declaration on Minorities and other

¹ For instance: Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 1995; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966; etc.

international standards. *The situation of the Bulgarian and Ukrainian linguistic minorities is evidence after 23 years, that the protection and enhancement of minority languages is not being realized.* The negative impact of the undeveloped legislative framework can also be applied to other ethnic and religious minorities, namely Roma people, Muslim and Jewish community and amongst other minorities.

Therefore, the government needs to undertake more *positive* measures towards minority groups. In this sense, the situation of linguistic minorities in Moldova can be improved by taking into account by the Moldovan government the recommendation 33 which sustain that:

“Governments should develop and implement inclusive and targeted education policies that provide access to high-quality learning environments for all persons belonging to minorities, and the opportunity, where appropriate for them, to learn and be taught in their languages as required by the Declaration. Intercultural approaches that are minority-sensitive should be adopted, with particular attention paid to reflecting the plurality and contribution of minorities to society and to countering negative stereotypes and myths” and also the following recommendations:

1. To clarify the legislative framework regarding minority languages in Moldova in order to create the necessary space for all linguistic minorities, namely having adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or having instruction in their mother tongue (art.4.3 from the Declaration).
2. Not to exclude the minority groups when formulating new laws, as was the case with the "law for equal chances", where the minority groups are not mentioned.
3. To ensure the implementation of such legislation through creation of specific agencies and bodies.
4. To start public discussion on the subject of linguistic minorities and to increase the level of awareness about the existence of minorities within the Republic of Moldova.
5. To ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Thank you.