

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
23 September- 4 October 2013, Warsaw

Statement of the Republic of Serbia

Monday, 23 September 2013, Working session 1: Tolerance and non-discrimination; National minorities

Thank you Mr. Moderator.

Mr Moderator,

Let me welcome Madame Thors and thank her for her though provoking presentation. We are convinced that good cooperation we had with Mr. Vollebeak and the Office of the High Commissioner will continue in future.

In recent years, Serbia has done much to improve the position of national minorities and protect their rights. It has undertaken a series of measures and activities aimed at both better legal regulation of this matter and improvements in practice. The basis of this minority policy is a full integration of national minorities into the social life and further preservation and development of their national and cultural specificities.

In the Republic of Serbia several institutions are involved in monitoring, exercising, promoting and protecting minority rights. Some of these institutions operate within the state apparatus, i.e. are an integral part of executive and legislative power, while some institutions have advisory character and involve special arrangements that allow consultation with representatives of national minorities on issues that are important to them. In June this year, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has adopted a Decision on Establishing the Council for National Minorities responsible for monitoring and reviewing the situation regarding the exercise of national minorities rights and the situation regarding the international relations in the Republic of Serbia.

(The National Minorities Councils Act, enacted in 2009, completed the legislative framework for the promotion and protection of rights of national minorities. The Act governs the status of national minorities in the legal system, electoral procedure for the election of national councils, determines over 80 competencies in the areas of education, culture, information and official use of language and script, the relationship with state bodies, bodies of the autonomous province and bodies of the local self-government units, financing the activities of national councils, the right to initiate decision making process, under certain conditions, regarding the protection of individual and collective rights of national minorities and other important issues relating to the exercise of minority self-government before the Constitutional Court, the Ombudsman and the Provincial and local Ombudsman.)

(Position of all citizens of the Republic of Serbia and thus of persons belonging to national minorities is largely determined by the current economic situation in the country. Measures and activities aiming to balance and/or equalize regional development are being implemented in order to reduce the outstanding economic and social differences between certain regions, regardless of the ethnic composition of the regions.)

(However) The funds for financing the activities of national councils are provided from the budget of the Republic of Serbia, the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and local self-government units, and they are distributed proportionally to the number of persons belonging to national minorities in accordance with the results of the last census and the number and scope of activities of institutions in the area of education, information and culture. In 2013, a total of 240 million dinars (around 2 million Euros) was allocated from the state budget for financing the activities of national councils. Significant funds are also allocated through competitions and by other ministries supporting civil society organisations dealing with the protection of national minorities.

Mr Moderator,

Full version of my statement will be distributed, however, let me present now some data from 2012, relating to the practice of exercising collective rights in areas where the national councils have competences.

National minorities which set up their national councils (20) also set up their **cultural institutions**, a total of 282, namely: cultural institutions, local cultural centres with clear national character, institutions for the preservation of national identity, professional theatres, and publishing houses in languages of national minorities.

Pre-school educational work in the Republic of Serbia is organised in 10 languages and involves 10,645 children. Education in languages of national minorities in **primary schools** is organised in 13 languages for 44,877 children and in **secondary schools** it is organised in 7 languages and involves 12,900 children.

Right to information in languages of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia in **printed media** is exercised by 15 national minorities, and 14 national minorities also publish cultural magazines in languages of national minorities. A total of 126 **printed media** in 13 minority languages is being published, and bilingual, in Serbian and 12 minority languages, a total of 44 printed media is published. The radio program is broadcast on 103 radio stations in 16 minority languages, **television program** is broadcast on 42 television stations in 14 minority languages, nine of which are broadcast by the public broadcaster RTV Vojvodina.

A total of 10 languages of national minorities in 42 local self-government units are **officially used** in the Republic of Serbia.

Thank you Mr Chairman