



## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2012  
Warsaw, 2 October 2012**

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**EU statement – Sessions 12-13**  
RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL MINORITIES  
(SPECIFICALLY SELECTED TOPIC)

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Madam Moderator

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union attaches great importance to safeguarding the rights of persons belonging to national minorities from the perspective of human rights as well as stability and security of the whole region. In this context we value very much the work done by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ambassador Knut Vollebaek, who is with us today. The work of the OSCE High Commissioner is of utmost importance for the whole concept of the “comprehensive security”, developed by the organization. Next year we will celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Institution of High Commissioner. It will give us the opportunity to look at the past achievements as well as failures and to analyze our current environment and challenges concerning issues of national minorities in the OSCE area.

The European Union calls on all OSCE participating States to co-operate closely with the HCNM on all matters related to national minorities. We are aware of the fact that quiet diplomacy, which characterizes the work of the High Commissioner on sensitive issues of national minorities, is sometimes less visible to the public but brings results of lasting importance.

The European Union recognizes also the value of sets of Recommendations the HCNM has been instrumental in developing and adopting by the OSCE in regard to minority rights in the fields of education, use of languages, participation in public life, access to broadcast media and policing in multi-ethnic societies. We appreciate efforts of the High Commissioner to work out and to promote the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendation on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. The European Union is looking forward to address the issue of a new set of guidelines on integration in diverse societies this autumn in Ljubljana.

The European Union strongly believes that protection of human rights, among them minority rights, is crucial to maintain regional peace and stability, to build prosperous societies and to overcome periods of turbulences like, for example, the one which we are facing now in connection with the economic crises. In this respect we underline that aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism are direct threats to values like democracy and human rights - the values on which the European Union has been founded. We underline that persons belonging to national minorities may be particularly vulnerable in the time of crises of different nature.

The European Union also appreciates the work of ODIHR, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and OSCE field presences in promoting human rights, among them minorities' rights and in resolving problems stemming from aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and racism. We support the work performed by non-governmental organizations in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, which contribute to building mutual trust and understanding between individuals as well as between communities and societies.

The European Union believes that discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, belief, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or against LGBT persons, endangers not only the stability and prosperity of our societies but influences the stability of the whole region. In this respect the European Union cooperates closely on matters of non-discrimination and tolerance with the OSCE as well as with the Council of Europe to bring more synergy to our common endeavours. As the recent example can serve the conference „To make a tangible difference to Roma people's lives“, organised by the European Union in Vienna in June.

The European Union is convinced that today's important sessions give us the opportunity to look carefully at problems concerning rights of persons belonging to national minorities in the OSCE area.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

*\* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

*+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.*