

**Forum on Minority Issues
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It is of high priority that educational issues are the focus of the Forum on Minority Issues. Problems in this area have not been eradicated yet, and they have a tendency to be exacerbated sometimes.

Today, we were given an opportunity to have a constructive discussion on the educational rights of minorities. In the context of the discussed Chapter 4 and the preceding Chapter 3 of the draft recommendations, I would like to draw your attention to the currently observed trend of permanently reducing the scope of application of the native minority languages, the number of secondary schools with an enrolment of minorities, and creating unequal opportunities for admission of young school graduates in higher educational establishments in the countries, where the possibility of learning the minority language was not questioned before.

The reform of the education system, which in fact, results in assimilation of minorities in these countries, raises concerns. There occurs a dismantling of a well functioning and, more importantly, an in-demand education system for minorities.

The hasty education system reforms guarantees no safeguards (as to the sufficient number of teachers, textbooks and other essential elements of the educational process) leading to a decrease in quality education along with a decrease in the level of student performance in such schools; it also leads to weakening of the competitiveness of minority youth in the labour market and increasing numbers of unemployed, as a result, making minorities more socially vulnerable and marginalised.

Teachers with experience in minority schools are being dismissed due to the lack of a satisfactory knowledge of the state language; this being the case even in the minority schools located in the areas inhabited by substantial numbers of minorities.

These examples should not be considered as single and isolated cases, they are becoming a trend. In this context, we would welcome including the following specific provisions in draft recommendations:

1. Any measures taken at the national level and related to the reforms of the education system, including educational establishments for minorities, should be taken in consultation with and participation of minorities.

2. States should pay particular attention to potential risks arising in the reform of education, and the development of programmes on prevention of the negative consequences of reforming the education system.

3. National education authorities should work to increase the share of the state language in secondary education curricula in a way that it does not make any harm to the quality of education in schools providing education to the persons belonging to national minorities.