

Association "Lithuania without racism" on Item V

Thank you very much madam Chair,

Our delegation would like to join the congratulations expressed by delegations on this 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration. In our opinion, one very important aspect is the practical information of the Declaration is the inclusion of the articles of the Declaration in national legislation. Unfortunately, in Lithuania we still have somewhat of a legal vacuum when it comes to protecting the rights of people belonging to minorities and this arisen after ending of the law in 2010 on national minorities. The department on the issue within the government was closed down in 2009 and at the moment its activity has been handed over to the ministry of culture. In the absence of the law we do not yet seem to have got to a point where we can ensure that people from national minorities can have their names in their passport for example, written in accordance with the rules of their own mother tongue.

Poles and Russians in some regions of the country make up something like 80 per cent of all the inhabitants and suffer from this problem. And they do not have the possibility of using their mother tongue at work or in the office in a way that would guarantee them self-determination in that respect. In the absence of the law, we do not have proper representation of national minorities in be it national communities councils. And again Poles and Russians who make up about 10 per cent of the population of Lithuania are not properly represented. There is also an absence of democratic methods in the elections to and the operation of that council and therefore some people who headed are somewhat passive and do not do that much to protect the rights of those whoa re from national minorities. Grassroots initiatives are not particularly welcomed either.

We believe that this is an extremely unfortunate situation and it has had a negative effect on the Poles and Russians living in Lithuania who are considered by this council as a sort of fifth column and whose children no longer have access to Polish and Russian language schools. Unfortunately, this does not increase stability within society and in the current situation there is no real way of taking grassroots or civil society initiatives to improve the situation. This leads a very fertile ground for unfortunately the growth of national negative trends towards minorities and discriminatory attitudes towards them in the country.

Thank you.