

Office for Human and Minority Rights – Republic of Serbia on Item IV

Thank you Madam Chair.

Thank you for this opportunity to present some policies of the rights of national minorities in Serbia. The Republic of Serbia belongs to the group of European countries that recognise through their constitutional and legal provisions of the relation of the majority nation and the national minority. It protects and promotes the individual and collective rights finding it to be its state and cultural heritage.

According to the last census in the Republic of Serbia over 40% of the population declared themselves as part of a national minority. Equality of the members of national minorities has been ensured in the legal system by prohibition of discrimination of national minorities, provision of civil equality and additional measures aimed to preserve their national, religious, cultural and linguistic distinctiveness in order to accomplish full equality among the members of national minorities and the major population in economic, social and political life.

Institutional recognition of collective identity of national minorities has been accomplished by the establishment of National Councils of National Minorities, which are a form of cultural autonomy of national minorities and a functional decentralisation. Now there are 19 National Councils of National Minorities. The members of national minorities may elect National Council for the purpose of accomplishment of the right of self-governance in the field of official use of language and script, education, informational culture, participation in the decision-making processes or decide in a panel team in all above mentioned fields and establishing institutions for fostering the participation of national minorities in the government and the management of public affairs.

The law prescribes that state bodies, territorial autonomy bodies, or local self-government bodies shall be obliged to ask for opinions of the council on the occasion of deciding sufficient use of language, education in the language of national minorities and culture.

The Council of National Minority may refer to authorities at all levels of their organisation, regarding all issues relating to rights and status national minorities. The National Councils are financed by the Republic of Serbia and autonomous provinces of Vojvodina from their budgets, as well as from local self-government units.

It is made possible for the representatives of the National Councils of National Minorities to take part in certain bodies that are important in protection and promotion of the status of national minorities. For example, the Council of National Minorities in Serbia.

In international cooperation like Mixed Intergovernmental Commissions for Protection of National Minorities as well as participate directly in decision-making in certain issues of importance on accomplishment of minority rights. Like proposing curriculum in the field of education or the decision of the traditional names of settlements.

Elections for the National Councils may be directly or by means of special electoral assembly. A special electoral register is keeping records, so the members of national minorities with their voting

rights should be registered in it. The data contained in the special electoral register shall have special protection in accordance of the law in protection of personal data.

The efficiency of this method of organisation of national minorities has been observed on occasions of documentation to prescribe the right political organisation of national minorities. Among other, the proposal of electoral elections of governments. Many problems between political parties and minority community have changed during tenure of national council leading to working of activities of certain national councils.

Thank you.