

Statement, by Oleksandra Koriak, on behalf of Minority Rights Group Europe

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Thank you Madam Chair,

Minority Rights Group Europe would like to address the issue of access to education for the Roma national minority in Ukraine.

When considering public policy, regarding minority language education, it is important to recognise that beneficiaries do not necessarily belong to the titular ethnic minority. In Ukraine, many Roma are raised speaking not only Romani, but other minority languages such as Russian and Hungarian as their primary language and receive their education in minority language schools.

Quality multi-lingual education, is important for achieving Roma inclusion in Ukraine. However, today, many Roma children still have limited access to quality education: a survey in 2018, found that more than a quarter of Roma families with one or more children, had school-age children not attending. The main reasons, for low attendance, include a lack of economic security for their families, low motivation to provide education to all children and lack of documentation needed to register children in schools.

Educational segregation of Romani children also exists and can take place in several forms: Roma and non-Roma children may study in the same schools but often, are placed in separate classrooms, or, if Romani and non-Romani children are placed in the same classroom, Romani children are located separately within the class.

Effective approaches to address access to quality education, need to take into account the linguistic diversity of the Roma population in Ukraine and good practices, such as the role of Roma mediators in improving dialogue between Roma parents and school authorities, need to be mainstreamed also in minority language schools with Roma students.

I would like make the following recommendation:

- Ensure the current educational reforms in Ukraine promote inclusion for Roma: This includes policy on minority language education. In particular authorities need to acknowledge and take substantive measures to end the practice of de facto segregation policy for Roma children in amongst many schools and education authorities.

I would also like to raise the attention of the forum, to the topic of Roma Persons Living with Disability in Ukraine. MRG has been undertaking research into the possible effects of intersectional discrimination, that maybe faced by Roma Persons Living With Disability and we have found there is little evidence that policy measures either for Roma inclusion or for Persons Living with Disability, take into account inter-sectionality. In the context of policy, for sign language speakers, it is important that policy makers and practioners, undertake a proper assessment of additional barriers, that a Roma person using sign language may face, including that Roma children who are hard of hearing are able to access sign education.

Further recommendations include for Ukraine authorities

- Establish clear consultative mechanisms for Roma representatives, activists and community members at national, regional and local levels to engage in policy design and implementation: this is especially important when the decisions in question directly affect them. Authorities should ensure that programmes and service provision in education (including minority language education), health and other sectors draw meaningfully on the perspectives and preferences of local Roma.
- Address the barriers that undocumented Roma face in securing access to education, health care and social assistance. The inability to obtain documentation necessary to recognise their status as living with a disability and both receive assistance and benefit from inclusion measures, puts Roma persons living with disability at greater risk of exclusion (this includes sign language speakers belonging to the Roma minority.)

For more information, please read the recent MRG report '**A Partnership for All: Developing Strategies for Socio-Economic Cooperation Between Roma Communities and Local Authorities in Ukraine**'

<https://minorityrights.org/publications/roman-in-ukraine-a-time-for-action-priorities-and-pathways-for-an-effective-integration-policy/>

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