

Piotr Kwapisiewicz / 2019 OHCHR Minority Fellow

Intervention to item number 2: "Public policy objectives for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages."

Thank you, Chairperson,

I am an OHCHR minority fellow, from the Jewish community in Poland, and I am a member of the Jewish Association Czulent.

Before the war, 3 million Jews lived in Poland, today according to the census figures, our community has only 7,500 people. We never needed support in education like now.

We need strengthening efforts to promote awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis regional or minority languages and the cultures they represent, as far as education is concerned. To build an identity is crucial to education, where the core is the education of our language. According to article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the promotion and protection of the rights of minorities contribute to stability. Promotion and protection are meant to help better implement the educational inclusion of minorities including their national, cultural and linguistic heritage. This means that public policy should aim to create textbooks and educate the teachers about the same. In 2013 Poland created a fund to contribute extra resources for schools with instruction in minority languages. Unfortunately, the state didn't develop a mechanism for controlling the spending of funds allocated to minority education and these were used for other related purposes.

Keeping this reality in mind, I recommend to the government of Poland to:

1. Firstly - create a National Action Plan for Human Rights Education in partnership with CSO. While implementing this plan the need to address the 'them' vs 'Us' issue needs to be kept in mind.

2. Secondly, address the development of mechanisms that improve efficiency in education, primary and secondary levels, including the mechanism for controlling the spending of funds allocated to minority education.
3. And thirdly, Providing updated textbooks and other teaching materials for regional or minority language education and further training of a sufficient number of teachers who were able to teach subjects in these languages.

Thank you, Chairperson

It was a great honor to take part in this discussion.