

FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES

Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities

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Item 3 – Public Policy objectives for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Mr. President,

There are 22 national minorities recognized in Croatia and protected by the Constitutional Law on National Minorities in an area of education, language, religion, associations and media. It outlines strong provisions for public participation by minorities, including reserved seats in government.

Education in the language and script of national minorities is guaranteed at the constitutional and legislative level. It constitutes an integral part of the educational system, as confirmed in core educational policy documents.

The State Pedagogic Standard for Elementary and Secondary Education, the 2017 -2020 National Minorities' Operational Program and the 2013-2020 National Roma Inclusion Strategy further define education in national minorities' language and script.

The Republic of Croatia has attained a high degree of implementation of the above-mentioned legislation. The education of pre-school to high school students in the minority language is implemented without any major difficulties in the country.

Members of national minorities exercise their constitutional right to education based on three basic schooling models:

Model A offers courses in the language and script of national minorities, meaning that all courses are delivered in the language and script of a national minority;

Model B offers bilingual courses, for example natural sciences are delivered in Croatian, while social sciences are delivered in the language of a national minority;

Model C offers enrichment in the language and culture of a national minority. This means that in addition to the regular courses delivered in Croatian, courses in language and culture of a national minority are also offered.

Various models featured in Croatian educational system provide rich variety of schooling options for members of 16 national minorities. In addition, there are various special types of courses of minority language offered in Croatia, such as summer and winter schools, remote consultative courses and special programs aimed towards the inclusion of Roma students in the educational system. Members of national minorities independently propose and choose a model

and program they wish to follow. All these models and types of schooling are a part of a regular educational system of Croatia.

Upon approval by the Ministry of Science and Education, schools that deliver courses in a certain minority language and script use textbooks from the country of minority origin, primarily to teach mother tongue, for example; Czech, Hungarian, Serbian and Italian language, but also some other subjects. The State secures funding for textbooks and other educational materials used in elementary and secondary schools.

One of the benefits available to minority students is that teaching classes and educational groups may be established for smaller number of students than is prescribed for the establishment of a teaching class for Croatian language.

What we have identified as challenging sometimes, is finding qualified teachers in certain educational areas that can deliver adequate level of proficiency in the language and script of a national minority. We are trying to address that challenge by fostering professional development of teaching staff, within the Education and Teacher Training Academy that also offers expert and advisory services.

Minority language curriculum is currently being examined as a part of the overall Comprehensive Curricular Reform, with the participation and input of representatives of national minorities.

The 2013 - 2020 National Roma Inclusion Strategy defines activities aimed at securing equal access to education for Roma children. Social inclusion and the full integration of Roma children, youth and adults, according to their needs, is the goal behind all the activities. All children, including Roma children, should enjoy equal rights, such as the right to education, health, language, cultural identity and a life in a family environment, under conditions that stimulate their development and growth.

Vulnerability of Roma children and families has been recognized in recent national strategies and recommendations included in international documents.

The Ministry of Science and Education has been delivering following measures/activities towards the achievement of defined objective:

- co-funding parents' share of preschool/kindergarten program costs,
- ensuring Croatian language learning for students who have no or insufficient knowledge of Croatian language,
- financing extended learning school programs, outdoor schools and extra-curricular activities, school excursions, summer schools, secondary schools and high education scholarships for Roma pupils and students,
- financing pupils and students dormitories, co-financing the literacy programs and training for adult Roma.

Croatia remains committed to ensuring quality education for all, taking into account various needs of national minority members that enrich our society. Thank you for your attention.