

Opening remarks on the 12th Minority Forum 28.11.2019

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Your Excellences;

Cher Rapporteur and Co-chair

Ladies and gentlemen

Education is the most important policy area in the society; as education is key for the future.

Let me put forward three questions and one remark:

The remark :: Without education article 4.2 of the UN declaration on the rights of minorities is meaningless : - the article that urges states to take measures to create favourable conditions to **enable persons belonging to minorities to develop their culture, language, traditions.... This can not done without the same persons having the linguistic skills which make such a development possible.** And such linguistic skills are developed through education.

I am also very satisfied that we today are concentrating on groups with linguistic needs, because I sense that linguistic minorities are easily forgotten under the dominance of religious or ethnic minorities.

And now the questions:

1.

Sustainable development goal 4 :

The goal 4 commits member states to strive to provide inclusive and quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

- how much have we noted the lifelong learning and what does means for minority education
- There will be such a demand for lifelong learning if citizens are to cope in a more and more digitalised world. This means that we need to look not only at the formal educational system. How is life long learning working for minority populations ? Do our present declarations on minority rights take that sufficiently into account ? **is there enough informal education in the mother tongue of minorities, so that minority populations will not suffer even more under the digital divide ?**

And talking about SDGs, let us make the most out of SDG thematic indicator 4.5.2 that encourages member states to report the “percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction - that will enable us to identify the most precarious situations in general for minority populations

2 Lack of relevant resources and teacher training

From the regional fora, - this new invention we commend the SR for very much, we saw clear reporting on the benefits of minority education, that the eventual extra costs will soon be covered.

But have we paid enough attention to the **increased lack** of good textbooks for the minority pupils ? Too often minority pupils have to use outdated textbooks and material, and their books are not updated with the same speed as that for the majority.

In the same way, lack of training of teachers for minority education. Multilingual education does not function without proper training of the right teachers; that can not be emphasized enough.

3. The role of education in creating tolerant and diverse societies.

But let me also state the obvious; if peace and stability is not gaining ground in the world, it will not be possible to reach the SDG's for all, and especially not for the most vulnerable.

But on the other hand, we should also develop educational practises which create more tolerance and understanding between different groups, between different linguistic and ethnic groups, between minorities and majorities.

The way we design educational policies is crucial, including the design of history education. History must be taught in a way that undermines hatespeech and spreading fear of the other.

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I hope the discussion will encourage the use of best practices - I know it is a truism, but taking into account how much economic arguments have been used in order to decrease minority language education, we need the good examples and the good economic cases on how inclusive education is the way forward.

And above all, we need to ensure that the education provided is an education that will provide the youngsters with the best learning outcomes, the best ways of achieving his or her potential and to give the tools that are necessary for an active citizenship.