

Contribution of dr. Péter HANTZ, Hungarian National Council of Transylvania (Romania)

Madame President!

I represent the Hungarian minority in Romania, a minority that suffers from discrimination and does not have equal opportunities for education.

Our disadvantages can be traced back to the lack of a basic right, namely cultural autonomy, which is a well-functioning practice in most European countries, but the Romanian governments do not want to implement it. We have several problems regarding primary and secondary education, but the most painful is our under-representation in higher education. While the 1.5 million Hungarians represent 6.6% of Romania's population, only 1.6% of the students in the Romanian higher education can study in Hungarian language. We do not have Hungarian-language higher education in a series of important fields.

I read with great interest the "Draft Recommendations on Minorities and the Right for Education". However, our experience is that such documents can help disadvantaged minorities only if:

1.) They implement a monitoring system, which involves NGO-s as well. As some speakers mentioned, some minority politicians may not represent or cannot represent the interests of their people;

2.) They implement a system that can efficiently point out the responsibility of the governments. The violations of minority rights could be made public on annual press conferences dedicated to this issue;

3.) They are detailed enough.

General guidelines that do not meet the above criteria are easily neglected by states that discriminate minorities - we have plenty of general recommendations without even a minimal effect. I would therefore like to propose these points to be included in the text. I would especially find it useful to attach appendixes to the Recommendations, which address specific issues. I would strongly recommend a Charter on Minority Higher Education that has been elaborated by the European Conferences on Higher Education of National Minorities, to become an Appendix of the Recommendations.

The Charter claims that the best solution for minorities larger than 100.000 souls are autonomous state-financed higher education institutions in their mother tongue. The Charter also clearly defines what a multicultural institution of higher education is. Such an institution would serve less numerous minorities. I think that universities that do not even tolerate multilingual signs cannot be considered multicultural. Finally, the Charter demands the Member States to introduce these issues in their legislation.

Thank you for Your attention!

For more information on the Hungarian minority in Transylvania (Romania), visit:
Appendix: [Draft] Charta of the Higher Education in Traditional Minority languages

www.emnt.org and www.bolyai.eu