



Regional European Forum on Minority Issues

Item 4. Resources for implementation of Human Rights obligations

Joint statement on behalf of network of Former OHCHR Minority Fellows

We welcome the establishment of the first ever regional Minority Forum and looking forward to the regional forums in other parts of the world, with even more inclusion of minority representatives and grassroots activists. There are 9 former fellows contributing to the work of the Forum and more than 100 defending minorities rights in different parts of the world.

OHCHR Minority Fellowship Programme is the most comprehensive training programme for minority representatives in the world which allows up to 40 minority representatives from all over the world to learn HR mechanisms in Geneva during one month. We welcome the financial contribution of CoE and EU member states to the Fellowship programme, namely Austria, Norway and Russia. But we believe: Europe can do more. We urge other states to support the Programme and establish a comprehensive regional Fellowship Programme for Europe. This Forum has proved once more: we need more minority communities empowered by knowledge how to defend themselves.

We also address recommendations to the EU Parliament, OSCE and CoE:

1. To ask governments, especially outside of EU, to guarantee access of minorities to education, especially to higher education and also to monitor and be vocal on the violations of minority rights outside of EU, example of such is the Baha'i community of Iran, banned from accessing to higher education during last forty years.
2. In this same vein, to guarantee access to education for Roma children, especially for those coming from socially disadvantaged groups who, irrespective of their economic struggles, are exposed to racism and structural discrimination. Romanes represents the very core of the identity of Roma community being historically endangered thorough persecution and exclusion or assimilation practices. Despite certain progress of institutionalization of the language in some European countries, many children and young Roma reject to learn Romanes within their families for reasons of discrimination and exclusion. Therefore we ask to introduce the teaching of Romanes as a compulsory subject in the primary and secondary school.
3. To make respect for minority rights as one of the conditions of their financial support to the governments;

4. To make empowerment of minority communities as one of the priorities of their donor policy; to simplify funding process for non-registered minority initiative groups and make it accessible in minority or regional languages;
5. To ensure accessibility of instruments and trainings of Human rights defenders protection for minority rights defenders worldwide (for instance, as in case of minority representatives and civil society activists in Azerbaijan).
6. To support the establishment of the UN Fund for Minorities, like the UN Fund for Indigenous people.
7. To organize regional (sectoral) meetings for minority issues (example Balkan countries).