

Fifth Session – United Nations Forum on Minority Issues

“Implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities: Identifying positive practices and opportunities”

“Practical use of the Declaration: identification of good practices and positive measures”

Geneva, 27 – 28 November 2012

Statement by Austria

Mme Chair,

With regard to the practical use of the Declaration and the identification of good practices and positive measures, Austria would like to share the following information on national laws, policies and practices that we have developed to foster the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Based on the constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination the legal system in Austria provides for extensive protection of minority rights according to international human rights standards. Comprehensive measures have also been taken in Austria with regard to the implementation of EU Council Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. In addition, the equal treatment obligation under the Equal Treatment Act imposes penalties for all discrimination offences, also for discrimination on grounds of ethnicity.

With regard to the representation of the diverse minority groups present in society, Austria has set up ethnic Advisory Councils for each of the six legally recognized autochthonous ethnic groups to advise the Government on minority issues. Matters concerning minority issues outside the Ethnic Groups Act are being dealt with in the framework of Austria's integration policy at federal and regional level which is being developed in close dialogue with all minority/immigration groups concerned.

Austria believes that education is key in guaranteeing the rights of persons belonging to minorities. Within our educational system “intercultural learning” was enshrined in the curricula as a general teaching principle in the early 1990s in order to promote

mutual understanding and respect, to identify similarities and to overcome prejudices. Further, a campaign called "Interculturality and Multilingualism – An Opportunity" (*"Interkulturalität und Mehrsprachigkeit – eine Chance!"*) to assist children and teachers in dealing with linguistic and cultural diversity in their own environments was launched. The Public Employment Service also uses diversity management as a labour-market policy tool to promote respectful treatment, by, inter alia, hiring of personnel with migration backgrounds and special training courses for employees.

Another government project is the increase of the percentage of migrants within the police force. Information campaigns and events are organized to that end. A career with the police is open to all applicants with Austrian citizenship who pass a relevant selection procedure regardless of their ethnic origin. A first initiative was launched two years ago by the Vienna Provincial Police Command entitled "Vienna needs you" (*"Wien braucht Dich"*) which was quite successful.

I thank you for your attention.