

Hungarian round table in Slovakia

Dear Mr Chairperson!

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to address the forum.

With the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Slovakia faces a complex situation, when the continent is under an immense migration pressure together with the threat of disintegration. Handling new problems is very hard when a series of long-lasting tensions exist in the country. I represent the Hungarian minority from Slovakia.

The Hungarian minority in Slovakia is the largest one in the country, comprising 458,000 people, representing 8.5% of the population. They form the majority of the population in the southern part of present-day Slovakia.

A series of basic minority rights are still missing, and the governmental attitude is often hostile against the Hungarian minority. According to the Slovak Act on the Use of National Minority Languages, multilingual municipality name plates have to be displayed if more than 20% of the population belongs to a certain minority. This provision is often simply ignored. Local authorities are not allowed to display road signs: this is the privilege of the National Road Administration. Multilingual signs displayed by civilians are in most cases removed by the police.

The State Language Law of Slovakia severely hinders the use of minority languages and punishes any "infraction", often leading to absurd situations. As a reprisal against the decision of the Hungarian government to grant citizenship for Hungarians living abroad, Slovakia decided to withdraw Slovakian citizenship from those acquiring a foreign one: this is even in conflict with the Slovak Constitution, which sets forth that no one can be deprived of it. Therefore, Hungarians in Slovakia have to keep in secret their second citizenship.

Hungarian students face discrimination starting from early school years. The Slovak language is taught in an inefficient way (as a mother tongue, not as a foreign language).

As a positive practice we can mention that a state-financed Hungarian Hans Selye University exists in the city of Komárno.

We can see from the best practices throughout Europe that well-being of minorities is not a trivial matter. There is an obvious connection between the well-being of minorities and society in general.

Thank you very much for your attention!

Forum on Minority Issues, 2016-11-25