

**Recommendations of the Institute for the Protection of Minority Rights to the Outcome  
Document of the 12th Forum on Minority Issues**

Budapest, 27. 11. 2019

**Opening remarks**

The Institute for the Protection of Minority Rights (IPMR) welcomes the fact that for the first time in the history of the Geneva Forum on Minority Issues, a series of regional forums were convened to further improve and substantiate the outcome document of the Geneva forum by means of input from stakeholders and experts in the field of minority education.

Given the fact that there are approximately 2.5 million ethnic Hungarians living in countries surrounding Hungary, our Institute welcomes that para. 6 of Chapter IV/1 of the Recommendations of the European Regional Forum suggests that "states should enhance regional dialogue and cooperation with kin-states with a view to developing education in and teaching of minority languages".<sup>1</sup>

**Evidence-based policies for depoliticization and the implementation of SDG goals**

We support Chapter IV/1 para. 14 of the European Recommendations, that "linguistic rights in education to be elaborated by the European Union should be based on scientific and pedagogical evidence". It is also imperative to *reaffirm the need for evidence based pedagogical policies on the national level*, as a means of avoiding unnecessary politicisation of issues pertaining to education in a minority language. IPMR finds it important to specifically highlight the importance of *de-politicizing education issues* through evidence-based teaching methods, as opposed to having a politically driven agenda behind education policies. De-politicisation of linguistic issues not only helps to implement the fundamental rights of minorities in education, but also contributes to strengthen social cohesion within multilingual societies by offering practical guidance, and scientifically substantiated methodology for building education systems that enable members of minorities to adequately learn the state language, while at the same time preserve their own minority cultures.

Relying on evidence-based policies on the national level is also important for the purposes of ensuring inclusive, competitive and equitable quality education for all (as foreseen under Chapter IV/3, para. 3), as well as to preserve cultural-and linguistic diversity.<sup>2</sup> Education policies should not aim at reducing such diversity in pursuit of generating cultural and linguistic homogeneity, by means of placing legislative, and administrative barriers to the use, and

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document underlined text refers to specific points of the Recommendations of the European Regional Forum.

<sup>2</sup> Similar observations were already present in para. 50 of General Comment No. 13 on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/1999/10). According to this Comment, the States have specific legal obligations to take positive measures to ensure that the education is culturally appropriate for minorities and indigenous peoples and it meets the requirements of good quality for all.

learning of minority languages, or by *imposing an education system that grants exclusive status to the official language of the state* to the detriment of the mother tongue of minority pupils.

Finally, in line with Chapter IV/A of the Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 (Special edition), evidence-based national policy choices are also key in creating education systems that “leave no one behind”. This guiding principle, which is among the defining features of the 2030 SDG Agenda, is of importance due to the fact that national minority communities are often among the most vulnerable groups that are subject to multiple and intersecting sources of deprivation, and discrimination.

### **Good practices in implementation**

We find the arguments of para. 2 of Chapter IV/2 - that affirm the need for harmonising minority language education policies with international law and standards - particularly important, given IPMR's experience that *non-implementation of international obligations* is among the root causes of public policy practices that disrespect existing linguistic rights of minorities. This makes it all the more important to precisely identify good practices in the field of minority education. Para. 12 of Chapter IV/2 recommends that “states should institutionalize and financially support good practices in minority language education developed by civil society organizations”. We find it important for the Forum to recognise already existing good practices while taking also into account the context-specificity and the limitations of the adoptability of such practices. For this purpose, we suggest the elaboration of a *comprehensive list of scientific literature* that is recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues as sources of inspiration for states in drawing up education systems that are favourable with respect to education in minority languages. Furthermore, it would also be useful to *identify those salient findings within this literature that enjoy overarching scientific consensus*. Such reflections could serve as a point of reference for national- and international stakeholders in de-politicizing education systems, and minority-related disputes.

### **Participation**

To secure inclusiveness, education policies pertaining to minority languages should be elaborated in consultation with, and through active participation of members of minority communities, in order to ensure the *proper incorporation of their preferences* in teaching methods that will be applied to their children (also enshrined in para. 1 of Chapter IV/3.).

Furthermore, and in line with para. 14 of Chapter IV/2, it is important for public authorities to exercise a certain level of *flexibility and subsidiarity in their decision-making*. While following the framework given at state level, national, and municipal authorities should leave room for grass-roots solutions regarding, among others, local implementation of national curricula, medium of instruction in schools, selection of textbooks, establishment of small classes, and pedagogical approaches to effectively teach the state language to minority students.

### **Institute for the Protection of Minority Rights**

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