



Delegation of Ukraine

Activities of the State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions on the Protection of National Minorities' Rights

Since the declaration of its independence, Ukraine has been striving for the creation of proper conditions for equal development and active participation of representatives of national minorities in the social, economic, political, spiritual and cultural life of the society.

The rights for Ukrainian citizens who are representatives of different nationalities as well as the guarantees of these rights are stated in the Declaration of Rights for Nationalities of Ukraine, the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine „On National Minorities”, Laws of Ukraine “On Education”, “On Printed Mass-Media”, “On Citizens’ Associations”, “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations”, “On Citizenship”, basic legislation on culture, as well as international acts ratified by Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine including the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages.

The State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions (further on the State Committee or SCNR), a central body of the executive power, is *inter alia* due to design and implement policies relating to inter-community relations, national minorities and deported peoples. Within the framework of the Action Plan for the implementation of the obligations of Ukraine resulting from its membership in the Council of Europe Ukraine has pledged to adapt the national legislation in accordance with the relevant international legal instruments.

Thus, on purpose to bring legislation in the field of international relations in compliance with the Constitution of Ukraine and respective international acts ratified by Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, SCNR has elaborated two draft laws – “On the Concept of State Ethnic National Policy” and “On Amendments to Law of Ukraine “On National Minorities”.

The Draft Concept of State Ethnic Policy contains a number of key principles which could help national minorities to preserve and develop their identity, as well as stimulate inter-ethnic dialogue and promote mutual respect among all components of the population of Ukraine. It went through public consideration and it was approved at the meeting of the Government committee on humanitarian and

social policy of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on June 2, 2008.

For today, the Draft Concept is currently under examination by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and it will be subsequently transmitted to the Parliament for consideration.

With regard to the draft law “On National Minorities”, it will be submitted to the Government for consideration within a three-month period after Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopts the Law of Ukraine “On the Concept of State Ethnic National Policy”.

Ukraine tries to give increased attention to the situation of persons belonging to the group of previously deported on the basis of their ethnic origin.

For the purpose of legal maintenance of the process of their repatriation the State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions has elaborated a new wording of the Law of Ukraine “On Restoration of Rights of Persons Formerly Deported on the basis of Ethnic Origin” which defines the status of these persons, establishes the state guarantees of the renewal of their rights, principles of public policy and powers of the governmental bodies and local authorities in relation to the renewal of the rights of this category of citizens.

The Draft Law has been already considered at the meeting of the Humanitarian and Social policy Government committee then it will be examined at the Cabinet of Ministers’ meeting and subsequently transmitted to the Parliament of Ukraine for adoption.

In order to solve the issues on legal, financial and technical maintenance of the implementation of the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ratified by Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on May 15, 2003) SCNR has introduced the amendments to the draft law “On the Ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” worked out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. Thus, it has been suggested to add Armenian, Roma, Karaims, Krymchaks languages to the list of languages requiring a special protection from the state.

Apart from these draft laws SCNR has elaborated the draft Presidential Decree “On the Day of Nationalities in Ukraine” for the purpose of honouring the contribution of the representatives of different nationalities into the preservation of international peace and harmony in the Ukrainian society.

Furthermore, a Presidential Order containing a list of action and measures to be taken to promote intercultural dialogue in 2008 in Ukraine was adopted on 25 Jan. 2008. In accordance with it 10 international and 11 all-Ukrainian festivals will be held this year.

For January 1, 2008 1372 public organizations of national minorities have been functioning in Ukraine and 39 of them have the all-Ukrainian status.

State funding provided for cultural activities of national minorities in different fields is considered to be one of the practical mechanisms of the state policy implementation on the preserving of ethnic originality of national minorities.

There are two budgetary programmes for satisfying ethnic and national needs of national minorities – “Measures on the revival of national minorities’ culture and financial support to the newspapers published in their languages” and “Measures on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages”. The chief manager of the funds of these budgetary programmes is the State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions. These financial resources are allocated in order to support cultural and educational events held by national minorities’ public organizations.

Thus, under auspices of the state, national minorities have a possibility to hold cultural and artistic festivals, days of national culture, competitions and Olympiads on better knowledge of minority languages, fine arts exhibitions, conferences, congresses, seminars; publish dictionaries, manuals and textbooks for Sunday schools, reference books in minority languages, collection of informative and analytical materials on the national and cultural development.