10th Forum on Minority Issues

30 November – 1st december 2017

Geneva

Statement by the Szekler Council of Gyergyószék

“It is a commonplace that tuition in mother tongue is very important for pupils belonging to a national minority, not only because language is one of the key elements of each people’s identity, but also because it is scientifically proven, that it is the most efficient way to accumulate knowledge. There is much less talk about the importance of studying the language of the majority and about how that should be done, although that has the same importance from the point of view of the integration of these youngsters in the society in which they are living.

Often the authorities consider this a duty for every member of the minority community, but they do not think that they have any kind of obligation in facilitating that. They presume that every citizen learns that language at home, from parents and relatives. This is the case also in Romania, where in the schools the minority pupils in this respect are treated just like those belonging to the majority, only the grammar and literature of the state language is taught to them. This is a problem for each minority pupil, but especially for those living for instance in Szeklerland, in settlements where the overwhelming majority of the population belongs to the Szekler community, so the children have practically no possibility to learn and practice the language of the majority.

The solution is that the authorities have to admit, that state language is a foreign language for the minorities so it has to be taught accordingly, with specific methods and from special textbooks. Only in such circumstances can be expected from minority pupils to thoroughly learn the language of the state. On the other had if this is not admitted and done as mentioned, that means practically a severe discrimination, a significant violation of the interests of the minority pupils, by making impossible their proper integration in the society, preventing them to attend universities or later to apply for jobs where good skills in the majority language are needed.”