**Summary of recent activities**

**undertaken by the Government of Romania to promote**

**and protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities**

**under resolution A/RES/74/165 of 18 December 2019**

The activities undertaken by the Government of Romania were aimed primarily at overcoming the difficult conditions of the most vulnerable groups, among which national minorities, given the particular circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemics. The most relevant activities were the following (grouped by operational paragraphs of the resolution):

**Under o.p 2 (promotion and protection)**

During 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, the Romanian Government continued its policies toward the national minorities by organizing activities targeting the preservation, assertion and development of cultural, linguistic, religious identity, combating discrimination and promoting tolerance, promoting the values of cultural diversity, mother tongue education of persons belonging to national minorities and the elimination of any forms of extremism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism.

Due to the limitations imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic, starting with mid-March 2020, the Romanian Government, through the Department for Interethnic Relations (DRI), identified new modalities for reaching the above-mentioned goals, moving gradually to online activities. They were aimed at:

1. Promoting the languages of national minorities in Romania through interviews meant to present their language and culture;
2. Promoting the literature of national minorities (for example, the most representative fairy tales) on social media.
3. Promoting customs and traditions of national minorities connected to religious holidays with special significance for persons belonging to national minorities;
4. Promoting the linguistic rights through drawings/paintings: on Mother Tongue International Day (21 February), the project *Mother Tongue, as Proper Name*. Drawings and bilingual information regarding linguistic rights of persons belonging to national minorities were posted online.
5. Promoting intercultural dialogue through art projects. During the state of emergency (16 March – 14 May 2020), artists belonging to all national minorities from Romania were invited to participate in the project *Solidarity for Community*. The project was aimed at bringing together, at a time of social distancing, artists with diverse cultural identities in a virtual exhibition on common values.
6. „*My Rights, Your Rights” Campaign – an action to disseminate the rights of citizens belonging to national minorities - 2020 – 2022*. The campaign took place online, in September 2020, on the web site and Facebook page of the Department for Interethnic Relations.

The texts published during the campaign can be found at:

<http://www.dri.gov.ro/w/?s=Drepturile+mele%21+Drepturile+tale%21>;

1. *The virtual museum of Turks and Tatars* – the project plays an important role in the revival of the Tatar language. The goal of this project is to capitalize on the historical and cultural legacy of the Turk and Tatar minorities in Dobrogea. The project, hosted on the site of the Department for Interethnic Relations and that of the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, was developed in collaboration with the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, the National History Museum of Romania, the Romanian Peasant Museum, the Institute for Ethnography and Folklore „Constantin Brailoiu” – Romanian Academy, the Folk Art Museum Constanta, the National History and Archaeology Museum Constanta, the Echo-Museum Research Institute „Gavrilă Simion” Tulcea, Romanian Television, the Turkish Democrat Union of Romania and the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars in Romania. The virtual museum can be visited at: <http://miras.gov.ro/1/>

A number of publication projects were carried out in the second half of 2020:

- *Inter-Religious Dialogue*: the album includes the main religious holidays of the national minorities in Romania, as well as a brief history of their respective religions.

- *Languages, Emotions, and Values: Identities in Dialogue* – Interviews with personalities belonging to national minorities on the subject of mother tongue. The booklet includes eleven interviews with Jewish, Greek, Roma, Russians, Slovak, Croat, Tatar, Turkish, Czech and German personalities.

- *Minorities’ Heritage - The Properties Seized During Communism* – The vision of ethnic diversity by capitalizing on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage is approached in a creative manner.

- *New challenges for multicultural societies. Fundamental rights and freedoms of national minorities during pandemic.* At the beginning of March 2020, the Department for Interethnic Relations initiated the project „The access of citizens belonging to national minorities to relevant information on SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19”.

- *The mother tongue as proper name* – *the linguistic rights illustrated by children* – the album contains a series of drawings made by children belonging to national minorities.

- *Diversity and cultural heritage through media. Danube Blue Book 2014 – 2020. Images and stories of people.* The main objective of the project was to promote the cultural heritage of the national minorities in Romania at regional level.

- *Solidarity for Community –* The works of artists representing all national minorities in Romania, presented on-line, were gathered in an album that highlights the common values that unite us and teach us to cherish diversity and solidarity.

One of the consequences of the restrictive social distancing measures adopted in the COVID-19 context was the need to adopt a different framework for non-refundable financing. Under these circumstances, the Romanian Government, through DRI, granted non-refundable financing for 22 interethnic projects in 2020, such as *Rromane godimata/Romani Thoughts,* a collection of Rromani literature, and the Short Film International Festival ATER-NATIVE, a project initiated by the Democratic Union of Hungarian Youth.

**Under o.p 3 (language opportunities, education)**

In 2019, the *National Committee for Desegregation and Educational Inclusion* (NCDEI) was set up as a specialized structure of the Ministry of Education. It coordinates the implementation of the *Action Plan* *for school desegregation and increasing the quality of education in the pre-university education units in Romania*. At the end of 2019, the *Methodology for monitoring school segregation in the pre-university education* was adopted, which regulates school segregation monitoring in accordance with the Law on national education.

At the same time, the annual offer for continuous teacher training activities via the Teacher Training Houses includes courses and trainings on topics related to the prevention and combat of discrimination and school segregation, the promotion of inclusive education, equality of chances for all children, intercultural education etc.

*Education response to COVID-19*

In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak and the related suspension of face-to-face activities in education institutions, the Romanian Government through the Ministry of Education took several measures to ensure the continuity of education. Some of them were particularly relevant for the young persons belonging to national minorities:

* In order to further support distance learning, the television education programme *Teleșcoala* has been broadcasted on the TV channels of the Public National Television (TVR) since its launch in March 2020. The lessons, broadcasted in Romanian and Hungarian, are mainly dedicated to pupils in final grades (grades 8 and 12).
* In order to ensure continuity in the preparation for national exams, the experts of the National Centre for Policy and Assessment in Education published preparation tests on the Centre’s website in Romanian and Hungarian. In addition, preparation tests for the discipline *Maternal Language and Literature* were also provided.
* Methodological guides for each school subject were elaborated to support teachers in organizing remedial learning, for the school year 2020-2021. Such methodological guidelines were also developed for *Maternal Language* taught in primary school, *Maternal Language and Literature* for lower and upper secondary level, respectively, and *History and Tradition of Minorities* taught at lower secondary level.
* A micro grants scheme for disadvantaged schools, funded jointly by the Council of Europe and the European Union, was launched by the Ministry of Education in October 2020. Eligible schools (including schools with Roma and other pupils belonging to national minorities) were able to apply for emergency grants in order to gain access to quality education and respond adequately to the pupils’ specific needs generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
* Beginning with the second semester of the 2020/21 school year, the Ministry of Education implements the National Pilot Program “School after school” aimed at preventing school failure and early school leaving by means of remedial educational activities. The Programme’s target group includes primary and lower secondary pupils at risk of early school leaving/ school failure, in particular pupils belonging to vulnerable groups, including Roma pupils. A budget of Euro 30,000,000 has been allocated for the implementation of the Programme.

Activities under the Measure 6, *Education - Expanding the promotion and cultivation of language, history and Roma traditions in the secondary and higher education*, are coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research in collaboration with the National Agency for Roma and the Department for Interethnic Relations.

DRI monitored the manner in which mother tongue education was provided in the context of the COVID - 19 pandemic and produced a document on this topic. The study analyzes the responses of national minority organizations to a questionnaire prepared by the Department and covers the periods for which the state of emergency and, respectively, the state of alert were established. The monitoring results were posted on the Department’s website and transmitted to the relevant entities.

In 2019, the Government of Romania, through the Department for Interethnic Relations set-up an inter-institutional working group for the revitalization of the Tatar language in Romania. The Tatar language, one of the 20 minority languages ​​in Romania, is protected both by UNESCO, as an endangered language, and by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, to which Romania is Party. As a result, the Tatar language was included as an optional subject in the primary school education program for the 2021-2022 school year, at the ”A.V. Rădulescu” School in Murfatlar, in Eastern Romania.

**Under o.p 4 (multilateral cooperation)**

In the context of *Priority Area 3 - promoting culture, tourism and people to people contacts* of the EU Strategy for the Danube region, the Government of Romania, through the Department for Interethnic Relations, organized the project *International Danube Day 2020*. It included, among other activities, the conference "Ethnic Minorities as Treasure of the Danube Region". The main objectives of the project were the presentation of cultural diversity as a tool for creating inclusive societies along the Danube, raising awareness of the pluralism of societies in the Danube region and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of ethnic groups that are the majority in one state and a minority in a neighboring state.

**Under o.p 5 (emerging challenges, hate speech etc.)**

The Inter-Ministerial Committee for Combating Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech, established by the Prime Minister, discussed the text of the draft *National Strategy for Combating Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate speech, 2021 –2023*, now in its final stages of adoption.

During 2020, the Ombudsperson, the National Council for Combating Discrimination and the Department for Interethnic Relations monitored written media reports and attitudes of exclusion, intolerance and extremism towards national minorities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hate speech towards the persons belonging to national minorities, especially the Roma minority, was also followed closely. DIR conducted an analysis following the monitoring activity and focused on the impact and the negative consequences of the spread of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities, related to the intensification of attitudes of exclusion, intolerance and extremism towards the persons belonging to national minorities. The results of the monitoring exercise were published on the Department’s website and transmitted to the relevant entities.

**Under o.p 12 (legislation and policy)**

In November 2020, the Romanian Government continued the process of collecting data on the application of the legal provisions on the use mother tongue in relation to the local public administration authorities (where the threshold of citizens belonging to a national minority exceeds 20% of the population). Questionnaires were sent to 23 local authorities in which citizens belonging to 12 national minorities meet the legal condition: Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian, German, Russian-Lipovan, Slovak, Turkish, Serbian, Ukrainian, Greek, Polish and Tatar. In January 2021, this collection process continued for the Roma and Hungarian minorities. The activity is an integral part of the National Action Plan 2020-2022 developed by Romania within the international initiative *Open Government Partnership*.

**Under o.p 22 (regional cooperation)**

The Romanian Government has financed projects that address gender equality of Roma women, with a special focus on the *Agenda 2030 for sustainable development* – the global strategy for sustainable growth – that aims “to leave no one behind”.

Romania made a recommendation regarding the *Football Makes History* project under *EUROCLIO – Inspiring History and Citizenship Educators*, which implies innovative collaborations in school education through football of various actors in the field of social inclusion and diversity. The recommendation was based on the experience gained from organizing *Diversity Cup*, an event in cooperation with the Football Federation of Romania.

**Under o.p 23 (monitoring potential threats)**

In 2020, the Romanian Government, through the Department for Interethnic Relations, carried out an extensive monitoring activity regarding the access of citizens belonging to national minorities to essential information on COVID-19, in their mother tongue.

The results of this monitoring exercise were published on the Department’s website and sent to the relevant entities, with recommendations.