Ms. Eglė Kiuraitė

Chief Officer

Relations to National Communities

Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania

Madam Vice-President, honourable delegates,

Let me present the situation of national minorities and their integration in brief. All minorities residing in Lithuania, despite their national background, are well integrated. Children go to national kindergartens and schools. There are 111 national minorities’ schools and 42 Sunday schools of non-formal education currently working in the country. National minorities issue newspapers, create radio and TV programs in their native languages. They all fully participate in everyday life activities, labour market, science, politics, public and cultural life.

Responding to the advanced question of the honourable delegation of Spain we would like to inform that in attempt to advance Roma social inclusion and reduce discrimination, the Department implemented the measures outlined in strategic action plans and the Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society for 2015-2020.

Roma integration into the labour market is assured by implementation of general measures and target projects. PI Roma Community Centre and Roma NGO’s implement the project “Working together with Roma – New Job Opportunities and Challenges” in six municipalities. The project aims to raise aspirations amongst Roma by helping them to access employment opportunities, whilst retaining their culture.

We have hired mediators who act within the framework of the ongoing project “Lithuanian Roma Platform – Going Local”. They provide one-to-one consultations, advocacy services, deliver personal assistance to Roma beneficiaries, and enable them to overcome housing, education and healthcare issues, employability and some other problems. The project’s aim is also to encourage the local authorities to consider the barriers faced by the local Roma communities and reduce Roma social exclusions by empowering them to bring about change in their life.

In 2020, Vilnius Kirtimai settlement with Roma living in poor-quality illegal houses no longer existed. Social workers and mediators support the relocated Roma navigating the private sector housing market, assist in paying off debts for public utilities, consult on social housing utilization issues, and provide other mediation services.

We have a network of schools with Roma enrolled and have developed practical recommendations on how to strengthen schools work with Roma families and improve Roma children integration in educational process. More Roma children are attending pre-school and pre-primary educational institutions.

The department’s aim is also to develop tolerance and respect, eliminate hate speech, and promote cultural dialogue. In the event of any manifestations of hatred, the department expresses its position, condemning any attempt to incite national, racial or religious hatred in Lithuania. Within the framework of the project Be Hate-Free: Building Hate-Free Communities in Lithuania, the department organized training, which aim was to build national minorities capacity in identifying and reporting about hate speech cases online.

 We pay close attention to the Roma Holocaust, promoting discussions on human rights and recognition of Roma genocide, issuing information and methodological publications, organising trainings. In 2019, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania added International Roma Genocide Memorial Day to the list of public holidays. We commemorate Roma Holocaust 2 August.

Thank you for your attention.