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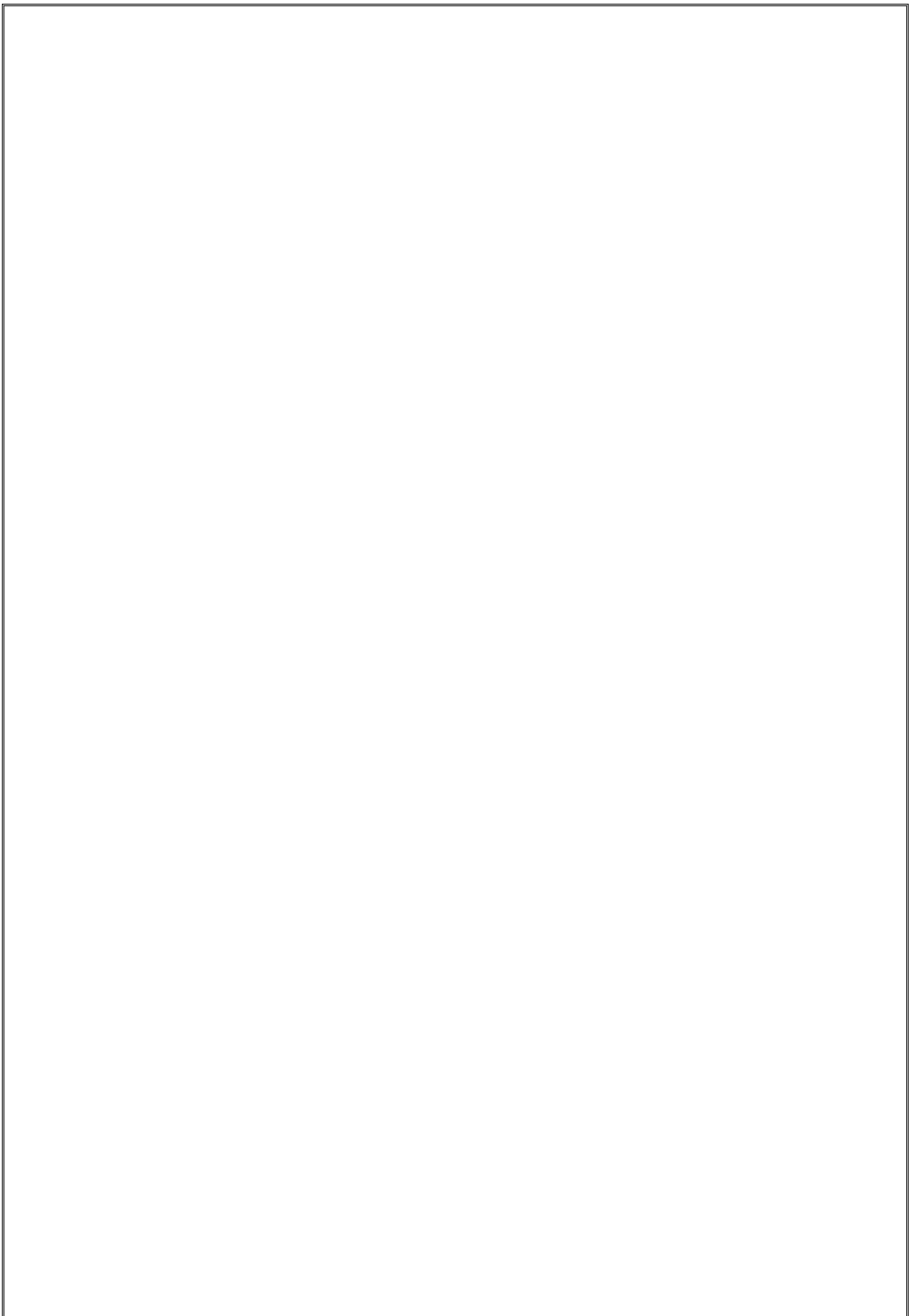
**ADACS/JP MIN (2000) 1**

**Interim report to  
the European Commission**

**on the implementation of the  
European Commission/Council of Europe  
Joint Programme on**

**“National Minorities in Europe”**

**Strasbourg, April 2000**



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## I. INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to take stock of some of the activities carried out within the framework of the European Commission and Council of Europe programme usually called the Joint Programme on “National Minorities in Europe”. Another of its aims is to give some indications about the successful initiatives and the inadequacies noted to date and deserving to be taken into account, initially in the context of forthcoming activities, and, in the longer term, with a view to possible new programmes relating to national minorities.

The programme was signed by the two partner organisations in January 1999 for a period of 18 months, and is the second of its kind. An initial Joint Programme entitled “Minorities in Central European Countries” was carried out between the second half of 1996 and the first quarter of 1998, backing up the Stability Pact. Given the success of the first programme, it was decided at the 5th meeting of government offices for minority affairs, held in Skopje in December 1997, to start a second programme in order to strengthen relations between governments and members of national minorities.

Since the early ‘90s, the protection of national minorities, which is acknowledged to be one of the factors which guarantees democratic stability in Europe, has been given increasing attention by European states. Thus the decision taken in Skopje at the end of 1997 coincided with another taken at the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government, which was held in Strasbourg in October 1997, when it was decided to put forward such a programme as part of an action plan intended to include practical activities involving both governments and civil society, backing up the two European legal texts which were at that time about to come into force, namely the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities<sup>1</sup> (ETS No. 157, of 1995) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages<sup>2</sup> (ETS No. 148, of 1992). These two texts, together with the human rights provisions included in the European agreements (on association) with the European Union, are the political and legal reference points for implementation of this programme.

Jointly funded by the two European institutions to the tune of 616 385 Euros for the period January 1999 to June 2000, this programme is perceived as a single framework for co-operation among European countries in the field of national minorities.

This second Joint Programme on the protection of national minorities has four features which did not appear in the previous programme:

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<sup>1</sup> At 23 March 2000, the following member states had ratified the Framework Convention: Albania, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Russian Federation, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Norway, Czech Republic, Romania, United Kingdom, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine, as well as Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which have applied for accession. The signatory member states were: Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland and Portugal. The member states which had neither signed nor ratified the Convention were: Andorra, Belgium, France and Turkey.

<sup>2</sup> At 23 March 2000, the following member states had ratified the Languages Charter: Germany, Croatia, Finland, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. The signatory member states were: Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, France, Iceland, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, United Kingdom, Slovenia and Ukraine.

- it is open to all member states of the Council of Europe and to the states which have applied for accession;
- it is based upon an essentially thematic approach (media, education, participation in the decision-taking process, integration, etc);
- it relates mainly to regional or bilateral projects;
- it makes provision for greater participation by the representatives of national minorities.

Part II gives a general appraisal of the Joint Programme and indicates the extent to which the aforementioned new objectives have been achieved.

Part III gives a project-by-project summary of the activities carried out in 1999, in accordance with the proposals for activities adopted at the 6th meeting of government offices for national minorities, held in Strasbourg on 15 and 16 March 1999. The list of activities which took place in 1999 is below (also see the timetable of 1999 activities in Appendix 2):

- i. study visit to Spain on Roma by Lithuanian and Hungarian delegations (Andalusia, 15-21 May);
- ii study visit to Austria on the implementation of the Framework Convention, by Polish and Georgian delegations (29 May-3 June);
- iii. seminar on the role of non-governmental associations representing minorities in the exercise of minority rights (Zagreb, 10 and 11 June);
- iv. study visit to Prague and Budapest on the work and operation of government offices for national minorities, by Armenian and Albanian delegations (12-19 June);
- v. study visit to the Netherlands on media and minority issues by Czech and Estonian delegations (21-27 June);
- vi. seminar on the integration of minorities into large cities (Moscow, 23 and 24 September);
- vii. study visit to Belgium and Strasbourg by a Lithuanian delegation (11-15 October);
- viii. conference on the representation of minorities' interests and on minorities' participation in parliament (Budapest, 15 and 16 October);
- ix. seminar on minorities and the media (Prague, 19 October);
- x. seminar on the role of national minorities in transfrontier broadcasting and electronic media (Szeged, Hungary, 28-30 October);
- xi. round table session on national minorities in central and eastern Europe (Bratislava, 19 and 20 November);
- xii. seminar on minorities and the media in Estonia (Tallinn, 2 and 3 December);
- xiii. seminar on integration into society through education and language learning (Riga, 2 and 3 December);
- xiv. study visit to France on interdenominational relations by a Moldovan delegation (6-10 December).

In conclusion, some observations will be made about possible future projects relating to minorities on the basis of the lessons learned from this Joint Programme.

## II. GENERAL APPRAISAL

### A. *Advantages of the Joint Programme*

At this stage of implementation of the Joint Programme, it is helpful to point to the vital role played by a programme of this kind in the protection of national minorities, both for the Council of Europe and for the European Commission. The programme also offers a number of advantages which the various protagonists may use to strengthen human rights protection, the real basis for the work of the two European institutions, and protection of the rights of minorities, in particular.

In practice, as these intergovernmental activities involve civil society, they make it possible directly or indirectly to promote the Council of Europe's legal instruments relating to minorities' rights, especially the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

In the context of Joint Programme activities, not only is particular attention paid to the two legal instruments already mentioned, but other Council of Europe conventions and European Union directives are regularly mentioned, in the light of the subjects being tackled (education, media, trans-frontier links). In Szeged, for example, in the October 1999 seminar on transfrontier broadcasting, references were made to the European Union's "Television without Frontiers" Directive and to the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. Whenever possible, therefore, the Joint Programme plays a part in the dissemination of information about the two partner institutions, while emphasising their complementary nature.

A programme of this kind also enables the countries which have applied for accession to the European Union to step up their intergovernmental co-operation with member states and draws attention to the reforms of institutions or legislation required for accession, with the involvement of civil society. Furthermore, a number of participants or institutions from European Union member states welcomed the opportunity to co-operate with their future partners and also emphasised that they had learnt a lot during these activities about the process of rapid democratisation through which the applicant countries had had to go, particularly through the adoption of new legislation and the setting up of a number of bodies responsible for minority issues.

In more general terms, the Joint Programme goes hand in hand with the strictly legal activities (visits by experts) relating to minorities sometimes carried out jointly by the two institutions. As the activities under the Joint Programme affect a large number of people (government representatives, representatives of minorities, NGOs, experts, IOs, etc) the programme spreads the message and also provides an excellent "shop window" for the respective roles of the two institutions in Europe, based not only on shared legal standards, but also on concern to co-operate and to engage in dialogue with civil society.

In this context, and in accordance with the wish expressed by both institutions when the new programme was adopted, particular emphasis has been placed on publicity. More details are given of this under the heading, "Evaluation of activities project by project", in the section on "Publicity".

The two Joint Programmes on National Minorities have enabled a network of government offices for minorities' issues to be set up in Europe. The periodical meetings of these offices are rather like those of an intergovernmental committee bringing together government bodies which report to various ministries (foreign affairs, interior, justice, culture, etc), depending on the state, or quite simply certain sections of those ministries. The national correspondents, most of whom come from the offices concerned, have got to know each other well and are now accustomed to working together. This is one of the tangible successes of the programme which needs to be kept going. A project intended to bring these government offices even closer together by placing them in contact via the Internet, and also involving links with other NGO and international organisation sites, is currently under study (see the conclusions of this report).

It should also be pointed out that the proposed activities under this programme are the outcome of decisions taken at the 5th meeting of government offices for national minorities, held in Skopje in December 1997. They were approved by the government offices for national minorities at the Strasbourg meeting of March 1999. The proposals were nevertheless reshaped in the light of current priorities and of recent developments in the participating countries. This flexibility is an additional asset of the Joint Programme.

Finally, the experience of the Joint Programme, which participants have generally considered to be a very positive one<sup>3</sup>, is likely to provide inspiration for similar activities, for example in the context of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> On each occasion, the organisers (or the participants, in the case of study visits) are requested to provide a written evaluation of the activity. These reports are available from the Council of Europe Secretariat. The synopses, which are appended, and the newsletter draw very heavily on the reports.



## ***B. Reorientation of the programme***

### ***1. The pan-European nature of the Joint Programme***

Whereas the first Joint Programme focused on 17 countries of Central and Eastern Europe<sup>4</sup>, one of the new features of the present programme is its broader, pan-European, field of action or, to be more precise, partnerships. The removal of the Iron Curtain and the dissolution of several federal states influenced the way of thinking in the early '90s, increasing the fear of greater numbers of conflicts linked to the presence of national minorities on the territory of these countries. While it now seems that most states of central Europe have made the democratic transition, a number of anxieties persist, especially where the fate of the Roma/Gypsy minority is concerned. What is more, major conflicts continue in the Balkans and the Caucasus. It is therefore worth continuing efforts to achieve the ratification and implementation of the European legal instruments which relate to the protection of national minorities, first and foremost among them the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The Convention, which came into force in February 1998, *de facto* makes the protection of national minorities a European aim to which most European states now subscribe. This is why the present programme has not taken a geographically targeted approach, partly in order to meet the objections of certain Central and Eastern European countries which took part in the previous Joint Programme and, rightly or wrongly, felt that an accusing finger was being pointed at them. It should be noted that the image of the Joint Programme has changed over the years, with the current programme being perceived less as just a way of calming potential conflicts than as a genuine co-operation programme.

It is clear from the table below that the Joint Programme has met the first of its new objectives, for no fewer than 35 Council of Europe member states or applicants for membership took part in 1999, either by sending participants or experts, or, quite simply, by organising one or more of the activities. Virtually all the member states of the European Union took part, to varying extents, in the Joint Programme over the same period.

A number of states stand out from the others on the list as having participated very actively in the 1999 programme, such as Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation.

Without belittling this positive development, we must view this reorientation of the programme in relative terms, remembering that, for budgetary reasons, it is not possible for the Joint Programme to include activities (seminars, round-table sessions, training workshops) outside the countries of central and eastern Europe (the same does not apply to study visits).

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<sup>4</sup> Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Ukraine.

Table showing the participation of European states, NGOs and international organisations in the Joint Programme on “National Minorities in Europe”

	6th meeting of government offices	Study visit to Andalusia	Study visit to Austria	Seminar in Zagreb	Study visit to Prague and Budapest	Study visit to the Netherlands	Seminar in Moscow	Study visit to Belgium	Conference in Budapest	Seminar in Prague	Seminar in Szeged	Round-table session in Bratislava	Seminar in Tallinn	Seminar in Riga	Study visit to Paris	TOTAL H + P + E
Albania	P				P											2
Germany	P			I			P		I		EI					2
Armenia	P				P											2
Austria	P		H	P					P							4
Belgium	I							H		P	EI					2
Bulgaria	P										P	P				3
Croatia	P			H/E					P		P					4
Denmark	I			I												0
Spain	I	H		I/EI			I		P							2
Estonia	P					P							H	P/E		4
Finland	P			EI					P					E		3
France	I			I			P								H	2
Georgia	P		P													2
Greece	P										E					2
Hungary	P	P		P			P/E		H		H	P				7
Ireland	I													E		1
Italy	P			P			P		P		E					5
Latvia	P										EI		I	H/E		2
Lithuania	P	P						P						P		4
“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	P										P					2
Moldova	P													P	P	3
Norway	I						E					E				2
Netherlands	I			P		H	E					E	P			5
Poland	P		P				P		P			P				5
Portugal	P															1
Romania	P			P			P		P		P					6
Russian Federation	P						H						P	P		4
United Kingdom	P			P/EI			P/E		P	P		EI				5



Thus the main area of application of the programme may be described as being central and eastern Europe. Although it is easier for western governments to call on other sources of finance for their activities, the possibility of financing through the Joint Programme might have proved useful for representatives of NGOs, journalists, and so on, from European Union member states who, in their turn, might wish to invite their counterparts from central and eastern Europe for similar projects.

## **2. *The thematic approach to the Joint Programme***

The first Joint Programme was structured according to type of activities, with meetings of government offices for national minorities, seminars, study visits and training workshops. It proved a sensible decision to base the second programme on a thematic approach, for this made it possible to identify priority sectors straight away: media, education, participation in the decision-taking process, integration, etc. Thus the activities were able to be divided into different “projects”, each on one of the aforementioned subjects. This thematic approach does not, of course, apply to the meetings of government offices for national minorities, which provide the main thrust of the programme, but to the other activities, and first and foremost to the seminars.

The project-by-project evaluation in the next part will enable more details to be given about the subjects dealt with in 1999.

It should be noted that this thematic approach also enables better use to be made of the experts who attend to clarify discussions or to play the difficult part of general rapporteur. More detailed information about the experts is given under the heading “The various protagonists involved in the Joint Programme”, on page 13 below.

## **3. *The emphasis placed on regional or bilateral projects***

In order to achieve greater efficiency in terms of the added value of programme activities, a decision was taken to limit multilateral activities and, in contrast, to promote regional<sup>5</sup>, and even bilateral, projects. Thus the multilateral approach was taken only to meetings of government offices for national minorities and to the small number of seminars, the subject of which might be of particular interest to a large number of countries which were not necessarily adjoining (for example, the Zagreb seminar on the role of organisations representing national minorities in civil society). On the other hand, the approach was based on geographical criteria for most of the other seminars (round-table session in Bratislava attended by countries of central Europe), or on thematic criteria (Budapest conference, to which the organisers invited countries where national minorities are represented in parliament, so as to provide input into the debate in Hungary). This does not prevent other countries from being invited to send participants at the request of certain governments wishing to participate in one activity or another. One example was the Republic of Moldova, which was added to the list of countries invited to the Riga seminar on integration. Another way of enlarging the circle of countries is to call on experts from states which have not been invited.

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<sup>5</sup> The term “regional” in this instance refers to a grouping of countries from a single geographical area.

What is more, the Joint Programme is also proving highly useful in a sub-regional context (Baltic States/Russia, South-East Europe, Visegrad Europe, CEI, Caucasus, etc). It was, for example, noted on several occasions in written reports or subsequent conversations that problems raised within the framework of the Joint Programme were discussed or even settled, during bilateral meetings. This advantage of the Joint Programme deserves to be strengthened in the future, in the context of other projects dealing with national minorities.

#### **4. *The various protagonists involved in the Joint Programme***

##### ***National correspondents and government experts***

The national correspondents are government officials. They play a central role in the Joint Programme, as it is mainly they who engage in discussions with the Council of Europe on the organisation of activities, choice of programme and designation of participants. The list of national correspondents was drawn up at the 6th meeting of government offices for national minorities, in March 1999. It is regularly updated (see pages 14 and 15 below for the updated list of correspondents).

Although it encourages the participation of civil society, the Joint Programme nevertheless remains an intergovernmental programme, within which it is the national correspondents who, directly or indirectly (through reference to other ministries), designate participants. When it is NGOs or representatives of minorities who are designated, this method may be challenged. This problem of representative status and impartiality has been raised on several occasions. It would be inaccurate to say that there has never been any incongruity in the designation of participants, but on the whole the choices made may be described as the right ones, and credit is due to the national correspondents, whose task is all the more difficult for the fact that there is a limited number of participants to be designated.

In addition, the fact that those who vehemently challenge this system were themselves designated through it invalidates their criticism. The argument that the representatives of civil society designated through this system are pro-government hardly holds water, for they are frequently placed in a position (and offered encouragement) to take part in discussions, particularly in working groups<sup>6</sup>. Government representatives themselves often distance themselves from the official position, thus making dialogue possible with the representatives of minorities. Some criticisms nevertheless deserve to be mentioned, for instance:

- several cases in which persons were designated who did not have a good knowledge of the working languages, a fact which restricted their participation in the discussions;
- occasional over-representation of certain persons or organisations as compared to others (in some countries, the same individuals and/or organisations are often called in for one activity after another);
- the designation of persons who are already persuaded of the justification of the protection of minorities, thus leaving little scope for fundamental discussions.

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<sup>6</sup> The division of participants into working groups at seminars is a frequent method of adding momentum to the discussions and refocusing debates.

***List of national correspondents, updated as at  
1 March 2000<sup>7</sup>***

Country	Name and Title	Governmental Department
Albania	Mr. Dervish DUMI Legal Expert on Human Rights and Minorities	Legal Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Armenia	Mr. Shahan AVAKIAN Acting Head of Legal Department	Legal Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Austria	Ms. Christa ACHLEITNER Head of Department for National Minority Affairs	Department for National Minority Affairs, Federal Chancellery
Bulgaria	Mr. Peter D. ATANASSOV Secretary of the National Council for Ethnic and Demographic Issues to the Council of Ministers	National Council for Ethnic and Demographic Issues Council of Ministers
Croatia	Ms. Milena KLAJNER Deputy Head of the Office for National Minorities	Office for National Minorities Government of the Republic of Croatia
Czech Republic	Ms. Marta MIKLUŠAKOVÁ Secretary of the Human Rights Committee	Human Rights Committee Office of the Government of the Czech Republic
Denmark	Mr. Mads LAURSEN Head of the Section for National Minorities	Section for National Minorities, Ministry of the Interior
Estonia	Ms. Olga BUNDER Counsellor to the Minister <i>replaced by</i> Mr. Tanel MÄTLIK Counsellor to the Minister	Minister of Culture  Office of the Minister Katrin SAKS
Finland	Mr. Eero J. AARNIO Counsellor of Legislation	Ministry of Justice
Georgia	Mr. Konstantin KORKELIA Deputy Director, International Law Department	International Law Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Germany	Mr. Rolf GOSSMANN Head of Division <i>replaced by</i> Mr. Detlev REIN Advisor to the Minister	Division of National Minorities Federal Ministry of the Interior  idem
Greece	Mr. Athanassios KOTSIRIS Expert B - Counsellor to the General Directorate C of European Affairs	General Directorate C of European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Hungary	Ms. Judit SOLYMOSI Head, Department of International Relations	Department of International Relations, Office for National and Ethnic Minorities
Italy	Mr. Riccardo GUARIGLIA Counsellor	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Latvia	Ms. Aina E. BALAŠKO Head of Division <i>replaced by</i> Ms. Eiženija ALDERMANE Head of the Naturalisation Board of Latvia	Division of National Affairs, Ministry of Justice  Naturalisation Board of Latvia
Lithuania	Mr. Remigijus MOTUZAS Director General of the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians living Abroad	Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians living Abroad Government of Lithuania

<sup>7</sup> Belgium, France and Ireland are co-operating on the Joint Programme on an *ad hoc* basis and have not designated national correspondents.

Country	Name and Title	Governmental Department
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	Ms. Elizabeta GORGIEVA Head of the Human Rights Section	Human Rights Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Moldova	Ms. Atanasia STOIANOV Director General of the Department for National Relations and Functioning of Languages	Department for National Relations and Functioning of Languages Government of the Republic of Moldova
the Netherlands	Mr. Hugo FERNANDEZ-MENDES Liaison Officer at the Department of Minorities Integration Policy	Department of Minorities Integration Policy Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Affairs
Norway	Ms. Anneline ULFRSTAD Counsellor on Minorities <i>replaced by</i> Ms. Barbro A. BAKKEN Deputy Director General of the Section of Minority Policy	Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development  Department of Indigenous, Minority and Immigrant Affairs Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development
Poland	Mr. Tadeusz <b>GAŚIOROWSKI</b> Specialist on Minorities	Ministry of Interior and Administration
Portugal	Mr. José LEITÃO High Commissioner for Immigration and Minorities	High Commissioner's Office for Immigration and Minorities
Romania	Ms. Adelina LOZEANU Director of the Directorate for Relations with Civil Society and International Bodies <i>replaced by</i> Ms. Rodica <b>PRECUPETU</b> Expert in charge of relations with the Council of Europe for minority programmes	Directorate for Relations with Civil Society and International Bodies Department for the Protection of National Minorities, Government of Romania  idem
Russian Federation	Ms. Zoya Y. TSIRENOVA Head of the Department for National Cultural Autonomies and National Cultural Associations	Department for National Cultural Autonomies and National Cultural Associations Ministry of National and Regional Relations of the Russian Federation
Slovak Republic	Mr. Juraj HRABKO Director General of the Department of Human Rights, Minorities and Regional Development	Department of Human Rights, Minorities and Regional Development Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic
Slovenia	Mr. Andrej ŠKERLAVAJ Counsellor	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Spain	Ms. Teresa MOGIN-BARQUIN Director General of the Directorate for Social Action, Minors and Family	Directorate General for Social Action, Minors and Family, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Sweden	Ms. Josefin BRATTBERG Advisor on Minorities	Ministry of Culture
Switzerland	Mr. Christoph PAPPA Diplomatic Collaborator	Political Division IV Section of Human Rights Policy Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
Ukraine	Mr. Mark MARTYNYUK Deputy Head of the Department of External Relations and Legal Affairs <i>replaced by</i> Mr. Andriy DATSENKO Deputy Head of the Department of External Relations and Legal Affairs	Department of External Relations and Legal Affairs State Committee of Ukraine for Nationalities and Migration  idem
United Kingdom	Ms. Julie CLOUDER Head of Policy Section	Race Equality Unit Home Office

□ ***Representatives of minorities***

One of the main aims of the Joint Programme is to facilitate active participation by civil society, first and foremost that of the representatives of national minorities, who are invited to participate on the same basis as government representatives. Their viewpoint is therefore reflected in all the discussions and conclusions of seminars or study visits. As such a variety of persons is involved, highly interesting exchanges have often taken place, enabling the political authorities to acquire a better understanding of the needs of members of national minorities. Representatives of national minorities now more or less systematically take part in the seminars, and study visit delegations are made up almost solely of representatives of minorities (Lithuanians in Belgium, Czechs and Estonians in the Netherlands). On other occasions, decisions have been taken to send government representatives of ethnic origin which differs from that of the majority (Russian delegation to Riga, Hungarian delegation to Zagreb, Slovak delegation to Szeged, and so on).

□ ***Journalists***

Several activities<sup>8</sup> have seen journalists who are members of a national minority or who work on inter-ethnic relations issues making a contribution and putting forward solutions to minorities' problems. More than one benefit accrues from their participation in the Joint Programme, for the way in which the media deal with minorities is important in the fight for equal rights and against discrimination. Whenever they are in a tense situation involving ethnic groups, journalists must remain vigilant, as opposing sides will be hoping to manipulate information to their own advantage.

It proves necessary in a number of countries to hold training courses to teach (or remind) these journalists about the principles of impartiality and the need to avoid discrimination, principles which are supposed to be applied by their profession. These courses offer ways of eliminating stereotypes or useless information about ethnic origin which may have repercussions on the life of the people concerned.

Furthermore, the presence of journalists gives greater media prominence to Joint Programme activities, some of which receive television or radio coverage making clear references to the joint efforts of the two European organisations.

□ ***Members of parliaments***

Within the context of Joint Programme activities, requests are often made for the participation of members of national parliaments (Budapest conference, Riga seminar), and even members of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (round-table session in Bratislava) or of the European Parliament (study visit by Lithuanians to Brussels and Strasbourg). Their participation proves useful, not only because they bring different lines of thought to the discussions, but also because they sometimes pass on the recommendations which stem from the activities.

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<sup>8</sup> See the activities under the "Minorities and the media" project.



□ *International organisations*

The two partner institutions have continued to work in close co-operation within the framework of this programme. So although the Council of Europe Secretariat is responsible for implementation of the programme, and therefore for providing representation as far as possible, the European Commission delegations present in organising countries have regularly been invited to take part in the activities. For example:

- Mr Gilbert DUBOIS, deputy head of the European Commission Delegation to Russia, attended the Moscow seminar which looked at the management of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity in large cities, on 23 September 1999;
- Mr Michael LAKE, head of the European Commission Delegation to Hungary, attended the Budapest conference which looked at minority interests and the participation of minorities in the decision-making process, on 15 October 1999;
- Mr Walter ROCHEL, head of the European Commission Delegation to Slovakia, attended the Bratislava round-table session which looked at policies relating to national minorities in central and eastern Europe, on 20 November 1999;
- Mr Geoffrey BARRETT, first counsellor to the European Commission Delegation to Latvia, attended the Riga seminar on integration into civil society through education and language learning, on 2 December 1999.

To this list has to be added the representative of the European Commission Delegation to Croatia, who was able, although he was not present at the seminar on the role of non-governmental associations representing minorities, to meet the seminar participants and organisers at a reception hosted by the Croatian authorities.

It nevertheless has to be hoped that the European Commission will be able to be represented at the next meeting of government offices for national minorities, as it was unable to attend the previous meeting in March 1999. Mr Ianniello, of Directorate General IA, Unit 5, "Multilateral Relations", who attended the meeting of DH-MIN a few days later, nevertheless reiterated Brussels' full and wholehearted support for the activities carried out under this programme.

Furthermore, in accordance with the subsequent decision of the European Commission to delegate follow-up of Joint Programme activities to Mr Arturo Rodriguez, of the EHRF (European Human Rights Foundation), he had been kept regularly informed of the timetable of activities and about the activities themselves. He had taken part in the seminar on the role of national minorities in transfrontier broadcasting (radio/television) and electronic media (Ms Eszter Fáy, press official with the European Commission Delegation to Budapest, was also present).

For your information, some members of the European Parliament and European Commission should shortly be invited to take part in a seminar in Romania which is to look at minorities' participation in public institutions in the context of accession to the European Union.

The Council of Europe, for its part, has been represented at most of the activities either by members of the Secretariat or by the managers of the Information and Documentation Centres on the Council of Europe, as it was at the media seminars held in Prague in October 1999 and in Tallinn in December 1999. An effort has also been made to accompany participants during study visits, with members of the Secretariat, for example, taking part in the Hungarian and Lithuanian experts' study visit to Andalusia (May 1999) and the study visit to Paris by Moldovan experts (December 1999). Their presence enables the local organisers to be given assistance when the delegation is a large one, as well as making it possible to ensure that study visits achieve their objectives. When no members of the Secretariat are present, some delegations are accompanied by NGOs (the Lithuanian delegation which visited Belgium in October 1999 was accompanied by members of the European Help Centre for Non-Profit Associations) or by the organisers, who provide this service free of charge (as was the case when the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs accompanied the study visit by Georgian and Polish delegations, and when the Netherlands Ministry of the Interior accompanied Estonian and Czech delegations on their study visit). The various Council of Europe committees of experts are also called upon when the subjects dealt with are relevant, as has been the case of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies.

Other international organisations have been invited to participate in certain Joint Programme activities, in a demonstration of the co-operation which exists at European level in relation to the protection of national minorities. The Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities was represented at the round-table session on policies relating to national minorities in central and eastern Europe (19 and 20 November 1999) and at the Riga seminar on integration into civil society through education and language learning (2 and 3 December 1999), for instance. Representatives of the Central European Initiative (CEI) were also present at the former, while the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) was represented at the latter.

□ ***International experts***

Although participants themselves are often already experts in the field under consideration, the Joint Programme readily calls on "international experts" to cast light on its discussions. They usually adopt a pan-European approach to the problem or supply additional information about their own country. These experts represent various professions, depending on the subjects dealt with, being academics, teachers, journalists, members of international NGOs, legal experts, etc. They are sometimes asked to act as general rapporteur, making a summary of the discussions and highlighting the main points raised.

The table below contains the names of those individuals who played a part in Joint Programme activities in 1999 as experts and/or general rapporteurs. Most come from western Europe, partly to offset the inability to finance activities in these countries. It may also be noted, however, that there are some experts from central European countries and the Baltic States. Roughly one quarter of them are women (the percentage of participants who are women is virtually identical).

**List of the experts who took part in  
the Joint Programme in 1999**

Nationality	SURNAME, First name and position	Institution/organisation	Subject dealt with, place, date
Swiss	ARQUINT Romedi President of FUEN	FUEN (Federal Union of European Nationalities)	Role of minorities' NGOs, Zagreb, 10 and 11 June
Croatian	VUKAS Budislav Professor of international law	Faculty of Law, Zagreb	Legal aspects of the participation of minorities, Zagreb, 10 and 11 June
Hungarian	HEGYESI-ORSÓS Éva Director and former President of the Office for Minorities	Kethanipe Limited Partnership-Consultancy in Social and Minority Affairs	Socio-economic aspects of the integration of minorities, Moscow, 23 and 24 September
British	WHITE Paul Professor of geography	University of Sheffield	Population and migration aspects of minorities, Moscow, 23 and 24 September
British	BLOOMFIELD Jude Senior researcher	University of East London	Cultural aspects of the integration of minorities, Moscow, 23 and 24 September
Austrian	RAUTZ Günther Researcher on ethnic minorities and regional self-government	European Academy Bolzano	Participation of minorities in local and national institutions, Moscow, 23 and 24 September
Dutch	VAN ONNA Hermanus Expert in social affairs, migration and refugees, and member of Eurocities	Department of Social Affairs and Migration of the City of Rotterdam and Vluchtelingen Werk Rijnmond	Social and migration aspects of integration and the experience of Eurocities, Moscow, 23 and 24 September
Dutch	HOOP Paulus Principal adviser on education and treasurer, DIECEC	Development of Intercultural Education through Co-operation between European Cities	The integration experience of the Netherlands and the DIECEC, Moscow, 23 and 24 September
Norwegian	VAN ELSLANDE Aagot Educational advisor and President of DIECEC	Development of Intercultural Education through Co-operation between European Cities	Educational aspects of integration and the experience of DEICEC and of Norway, Moscow, 23 and 24 September
Italian	LOMBARDI Marco European secretary to the Metropolis Project	Metropolis Project	The integration experience of Metropolis, Moscow, 23 and 34 September
Austrian	MAYR Wolfgang Journalist	Italian Radio and Television (RAI)	Transfrontier media, Szeged, 28-30 October
Greek	PAPANIKOLATOS Nafsika Spokesman for MRG-Greece and CEDIME-SE	Minority Rights Group -Greece	Electronic media and the role of minorities' NGOs, Szeged, 28-30 October
German	KLEBES Heinrich Honorary Clerk of the Parliamentary Assembly	Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly	Minorities and human rights in Europe, Bratislava, 19 and 20 November
Dutch	VERSPAGET Joséphine Chair of the Group of Specialists on Roma/Gypsies	Council of Europe Group of Specialists on Roma/Gypsies	Protection of Roma/Gypsies, Bratislava, 19 and 20 November
Norwegian	GRAMSTAD Sigve Director General, Chair of the Committee of the Charter Languages	Norwegian Media Ownership Authority	European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Bratislava, 19 and 20 November
British	PHILLIPS Alan Director of MRG and First Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Framework Convention	Minority Rights Group (MRG)	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the role of NGOs Bratislava, 19 and 20 November
Estonian	JÄRVE Priit Analyst at ECMI	European Centre on Minority Issues (ECMI)	Integration issues and the Estonian experience, Riga, 2 and 3 December
Latvian	ĀBOLTIŅS Reinis Expert and head of the minorities section	Information Centre of the Naturalisation Board of Latvia	Integration issues and the Latvian experience, Riga, 2 and 3 December
Finnish	JAAKOLA Marja Educational TV programme producer	State TV in Finland	Multi-media language teaching, Riga, 2 and 3 December
Irish	Ó RIAGÁIN Pádraig Research professor	Linguistic Institute of Ireland (ITE)	Linguistic questions, Riga, 2 and 3 December

□ *Non-governmental organisations*

Numerous national or international NGOs take an interest in Joint Programme activities. The names of some<sup>9</sup> of the NGOs which took part in the Joint Programme in 1999 appear at the bottom of the table on page 11 and with the list of experts on page 19. Some of these work in a more specific field<sup>10</sup>, making it easy to involve them in certain activities.

Seminars like the one held in Zagreb (June 1999) on the role of NGOs which represent minorities were a great success. Most of the participants were not official representatives, but members of civil society, who had the opportunity, despite their status as observers, to speak and to put their point of view.

It is nevertheless regrettable that certain countries have still not deemed it useful when organising activities to ask them to be present. From now on, it is planned to ensure that invitations are sent systematically to the NGOs, even if this means a slight change in the usual process for the designation of participants (see the conclusions of this report).

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<sup>9</sup> This list does not contain the names of all minorities' organisations or associations regularly invited to participate in Joint Programme activities, as full participants or as observers.

<sup>10</sup> For example, EBLUL deals with language issues, Eurocities and Metropolis with integration issues, DIECEC with education questions, FUEN with the development of transfrontier links, and so on.

### **III. EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES PROJECT BY PROJECT**

This section sets out to make a more detailed evaluation of the main themes in each project (education, media, integration and participation) while also evaluating the different types of activity (seminars, study visits, periodic meetings, training workshops) agreed when the Joint Programme was adopted.

In addition to a brief reminder of the activities to be financed in each project, followed by brief comment on the positive and negative aspects of each activity, the reader can consult a summary/synopsis of each 1999 activity in the appendix (in English or French).

## PROJECT I

### *Periodical meetings of government offices for minorities*

- Activity I.1**            **Sixth meeting of government offices for national minorities, Strasbourg**  
*Activity financed by the Council of Europe in March 1999*
- Activity I.2**            **Seventh meeting of government offices for national minorities, Riga, Latvia**  
*Activity which the Council of Europe will finance in June 2000*

### General remarks

The first meeting of government offices for national minorities of central and eastern European countries took place at Budapest in November 1994, at the Hungarian government's instigation. The two Joint Programmes have institutionalised the meetings, which since 1996 have been virtually annual. The meetings are the keystone of the programmes: they establish links between government departments in Europe responsible for minorities' interests; they propose and adopt activities; and lastly, on completion of the programme, they take stock and agree guidelines for future co-operation<sup>11</sup>.

The meetings of government offices for national minorities clearly cover the same kind of ground as other Council of Europe intergovernmental meetings on minority questions, in particular the meetings of the Committee of Experts on Issues relating to the Protection of National Minorities (DH-MIN), whose members are mostly drawn from foreign affairs ministries.

Linking up the two sets of meetings was particularly warranted in that a number of DH-MIN members are also national correspondents to the Joint Programme (Albania, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine) or work closely with the national correspondents (Bulgaria and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia").

It therefore made sense to try to partly combine the two types of intergovernmental meeting<sup>12</sup>, with the main aims of:

- familiarising DH-MIN with the Joint Programme, and *vice versa*;
- devoting a joint day to an exchange of views on participation by national minorities in decision-making, based on expert analysis of replies to a DH-MIN questionnaire on the subject and on a publication generated by a seminar held in Brdo (Slovenia) in December 1997 under the previous Joint Programme on minorities (see under "Publications");

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<sup>11</sup> See also page 8.

<sup>12</sup> This is why the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of government offices for national minorities was held in Strasbourg, not Riga, as originally planned.

- lastly, discussing minority participation both from the internal standpoint (that of government offices) and the external one (that of representatives of foreign affairs ministries).

In the view of all the participating countries, including the NGOs present (the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL) and the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)), the joint meeting of government-office representatives and DH-MIN members was extremely useful. Notably, it allowed involvement of NGOs, whereas the DH-MIN and the meetings of government offices are generally held *in camera*.

It would be worth having another meeting of this kind to take discussion further and tackle other questions which are of concern to a large number of countries and can be handled both at foreign-affairs level and at national level through government offices for national minorities. Media access for national minorities, education through the medium of minority languages, and equal access to the labour market are some examples.

However, it is essential that the meetings of government offices for national minorities not confine themselves to mere evaluation or adoption of activities but focus discussion on a particular issue, which of course could be done at joint meetings with the DH-MIN.

As an indication, it is planned that the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of government offices for national minorities (Riga, Latvia, June 2000) take stock of all developments in the period covered by the two Joint Programmes (1996-2000): new legislation or amendments, new government machinery for minorities, new associations registered, etc. A questionnaire is being prepared and should shortly be sent out to national correspondents.

## PROJECT II

### *Minorities and the media*

- Activity II.1.a** Study visit by Czech experts to the Netherlands  
*Activity financed by the European Commission in June 1999*
- Activity II.1.b** Round table on the media and minorities, Prague  
*Financed by the European Commission in October 1999*
- Activity II.2** Regional seminar on cross-border communications (radio and television) for national minorities  
*Financed by the European Commission in October 1999*
- Activity II.3** Training workshop for Ukrainian journalists working in multi-ethnic conditions  
*Activity to be financed by the Council of Europe in 2000*
- Activity II.4** Study visit by Estonian experts to the Netherlands  
*Activity financed by the European Commission in June 1999*
- Activity II.5** Training seminar for Romanian journalists working on national-minority issues  
*Token entry.*

### General remarks

Of the various themes put forward in connection with the Joint Programme, the media attracted most proposals. Clearly the media are a key issue in any democratic state, and unsurprisingly they come in for special attention in the emerging democracies of central and eastern Europe. Minority involvement in the media is important because minorities often have no media voice - hence the large sums allocated to the project by the European Commission<sup>13</sup> and the Council of Europe.

### Comments on Activities II.1a, II.1b and II.4

Given the similarity and complementarity of the Czech and Estonian proposals (II.1a and II.5), a combined study visit to the Netherlands was held in June 1999. The study visit was a perfect example of the reoriented Joint Programme:

- firstly it focused on a well-defined subject: minority access to the media and unrestricted use of the media;
- the delegations were made up almost exclusively of journalists or representatives of national minorities, and most of the journalists were themselves members of minority ethnic groups;
- lastly, in the case of both countries there were follow-up measures.

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<sup>13</sup> The European Commission's Agenda 2000 identifies the media as one of the priorities in the minority protection field.



On the basis of the report by the Czech journalists who took part in the study visit to the Netherlands, and with their co-operation and that of *Radio Free Europe*, the Czech government Committee for Human Rights held a large conference (with over 100 participants) in Prague in October 1999 (activity II.1.b) which brought together journalists from all over the country, journalists from neighbouring Slovakia and some western European countries, officials, and minority NGOs. The conference was of course well covered by the media and press releases and articles were published.

As the sum allocated to the Estonian study visit to the Netherlands had not been entirely spent, it was possible to make a financial contribution to a seminar, held in December 1999, on media and minorities in Estonia in the run up to European Union membership. Dutch participants whom the Estonian organisers had met some months earlier felt that the conference was highly constructive. Bilateral co-operation between the two countries in matters of media and minorities seems to be taking shape.

The Estonian visit to the Netherlands was filmed by a team of reporters who were part of the delegation. The report was shown in several parts on Estonian national television during a Russian-language programme. The Directorate General of Human Rights was given a video cassette of it, with a summary in English. A recording was made of the December seminar and submitted together with participants' reports.

A feature of these study visits was the involvement of civil society: the Czech delegation was wholly made up of journalists (the Czech government Committee for Human Rights having deliberately given priority to practitioners), who moreover belonged to national minorities (the Roma and Polish minorities) or were working on minority issues. The Estonian delegation was a mix of officials and minority representatives, though the hard core was nonetheless a team of journalists, which took advantage of the visit to make a film report on integration of minorities in the Netherlands.

### **Comments on Activity II.2**

This regional seminar was also a success. Even though, with hindsight, the absence of western countries was a pity, discussion in the work groups was fruitful and animated. In addition to matters of cross-border broadcasting, for the first time in the Joint Programme the electronic media were on the agenda. Closer co-operation in this area between the participating countries seems to be the next step in development of international co-operation on minority matters (see the findings of the present report).

## PROJECT III

### *Education of minorities*

- Activity III.1**            **Seminar in Latvia on curricula and the languages in which instruction is conducted**  
*Activity financed by the European Commission in December 1999*
- Activity III.2**            **Bilateral Ukrainian - Romanian project**  
*Token entry*

### General remarks

The seminar in Latvia on integration through education and language learning (see remarks below) is not the only education-related activity there has been in the programme: questions of minority education were discussed in Moscow in September 1999 in the context of integration of minorities and migrants in European cities, and were also the subject of a seminar in Croatia in June 1999 at which a number of NGOs raised problems of education through the medium of a minority language in the participating countries.

### Comments on activity III.1

The original proposal was confined to problems of school curricula. As the second Latvian proposal (V.1 in the project on integration and tolerance) was not granted any budget allocation, the Latvian authorities suggested designing a programme grouping together the various aspects (integration, education and languages). This combination of topics was particularly judicious in the Baltic context, the Latvian Office for Integration, in charge of organising the seminar, being on the point of submitting for government approval a strategy on integration into Latvian society in which teaching and use of languages occupied a prominent place.

Estonia, whose proposal for a seminar on youth integration (V.2) was not granted any budget allocation, and which had also drafted a paper on integration of minorities, was invited to the seminar, as were Lithuania and the Russian Federation (integration matters are relevant to a number of the Russian Federation's components). Moldova, having expressed interest in attending the seminar on account of discussions under way on drawing up a national integration programme<sup>14</sup>, was invited to send participants.

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<sup>14</sup> On 21 and 22 March 2000 a conference on social integration in Moldova was held at Chişinău. The Council of Europe attended. The main organiser of the conference was present at Riga in December 1999.

## PROJECT IV

### *Participation of minorities in decision-making processes*

- Activity IV.1**            **Regional seminar in Slovenia on the role and influence of national minorities and their participation in bilateral relations**  
*Activity to be financed by the European Commission in May 2000*
- Activity IV.2**            **Seminar in Croatia on the role of minorities' organisations in the exercise of minority rights**  
*Activity co-financed by the European Commission and the Council of Europe in June 1999*
- Activity IV.3**            **Seminar in Moscow on minority participation in cities**  
*Financed by the Council of Europe in September 1999*
- Activity IV.4**            **Seminar in Romania on parliamentary representation of national minorities**  
*To be financed by the European Commission in May 2000*

### General remarks

Participation is a key topic in the Joint Programme, reflecting the desire of many people belonging to national minorities for representation not only through NGOs and political parties but also at the institutional level (local authorities, advisory governmental bodies, parliament, or indeed government).

Under the previous programme a multilateral seminar attended by 15 European countries was held in Slovenia in December 1997. The papers, and the replies to a questionnaire on minority participation at various levels, were gathered together into a publication (see Project VIII) available, in its English version (stocks limited), from the Council of Europe or the Slovenian organisers (the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the government Office for National Minorities and the Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana).

### Comments on Activity IV.2

The seminar in Croatia showed that it was essential to involve NGOs more in the Joint Programme and that there was a determination on their part to set up trans-European networks for exchange of information and good practice. The participation of many west European countries and the participants' openmindedness led to lively wide-ranging discussion taking in immigrant questions (see also the Moscow seminar).

It is always desirable that activities give rise to a degree of follow-up. From that standpoint the seminar was a success - presentation of the various "models" aroused the curiosity of a large number of participants. Dutch participants subsequently visited Romania and the Croatian organisers made a study visit to Italy (Trentino-South Tyrol), the Netherlands and the United Kingdom<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> The Croatian government Office for National Minorities provided the Council of Europe with copies of the reports of their study visits.

Another seminar for minorities' organisations and government representatives of Croatia and neighbouring countries is planned in spring 2000 to promote cultural exchange and bilateral agreements (see Part IV, on activities in the year 2000).

### *Comments on Activity IV.3*

Although the Russian proposal was originally framed in such a way that it was fitted into Project III, on participation, the main subject of the seminar in Moscow in September 1999 was integration of minorities and migrants in Europe's cities. There was a working group on participation, while another group of participants and specialists looked at cultural and education matters. The seminar was attended by a large number of trans-European NGOs and European cities with some experience of integration questions.

### *Comments on additional activities*

In addition to the above activities, a conference on minority representation at parliamentary level was held in Budapest in October 1999 at the instigation of the ombudsman for national-minority and ethnic-minority rights. This proposal, which was submitted after the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of government offices for national minorities, was nonetheless financed under the Joint Programme on the basis of remaining funds. Its subject was the same as that for Activity IV.4, proposed by Romania. The justification for mounting this activity in Hungary was that representation of minorities in parliament is still a controversial matter in Hungary, which, unlike other countries in the region (e.g. Romania, Croatia and Slovenia), has not yet adopted a policy of having seats set aside for minorities.

The Romanian proposal (IV.4) was accordingly adjusted and will deal (see year-2000 list of activities) with participation of national minorities in state institutions (parliament, local authorities, etc) and in NGOs. Discussion will be refocused on European Union membership and the beneficial effects which membership might have on protection of national minorities.

## **PROJECT V**

### *Integration and tolerance*

**Activity V.1**                    **Seminar in Latvia on integration and language policy**  
*Token entry.*

**Activity V.2**                    **Seminar in Estonia on youth integration**  
*Token entry.*

### *General remarks*

Although the above activity proposals were not adopted in the budget, efforts were made to combine the suggested subjects with other activities (see in particular the comments and synopses concerning Activities III.1 and IV.3).

### *Comments on additional activities*

A round table on policies on national minorities, with special reference to Roma/Gypsies, was held in Bratislava in November 1999 thanks to a voluntary contribution from the Principality of Liechtenstein. In view of its multilateral character, this additional activity was included in the schedule of the Joint Programme.

## PROJECT VI

### *General study visits*

#### Activities VI.1 to VI.10

- **Study visit by Hungarian and Lithuanian delegations to Andalusia, Spain**  
*Financed by the European Commission in May 1999*
- **Study visit by Polish and Georgian delegations to Austria**  
*Financed by the Council of Europe in May/June 1999*
- **Study visit to Prague and Budapest by Armenian and Albanian delegations**  
*Financed by the Council of Europe in June 1999*
- **Study visit to Belgium and Strasbourg by a Lithuanian delegation**  
*Financed by the European Commission in September 1999*
- **Study visit to Paris by a Moldovan delegation**  
*Financed by the Council of Europe in December 1999*

#### *General remarks*

Study visits are sometimes dismissed as a form of political tourism. Experience with the previous Joint Programme indicated that aberrations can occur but that, in most cases, visits are taken seriously and produce results (see below).

In the second Joint Programme quality prevailed over quantity: fewer study visits were held but they were better targeted and often combined. However the practice of combining delegations has its limitations:

- there is little communication between delegations if there is no common language or if interests diverge (beforehand it is necessary to carefully identify each delegation's objectives);
- programmes need adapting to everyone's requirements;
- combined study visits are not possible if delegations are large, for organisational and supervision/assistance reasons.

A drawback to study visits is that they tend to entail a fair amount of travel (across a city, or even country), making for rather tight programmes. On several occasions end-of-programme rendezvous have had to be cancelled at the last minute, which is disappointing for the organisers, hence the need to build breaks into programmes and arrange for delegations to be accompanied (either by members of the Council of Europe Secretariat or by the institutions in the host country, which are often pleased to make arrangements free of charge).

### *Comments on 1999 study visits*

As a result of the Hungarian delegation's study visit to Andalusia, there is shortly to be a workshop in Budapest on Roma/Gypsies, to which will be invited, among others, the Andalusians met in May 1999 and Finnish specialists<sup>16</sup>.

The Lithuanians' study visit to Andalusia helped with setting up an education centre for Roma/Gypsies in Vilnius in autumn 1999.

On follow-up to the Estonian and Czech study visits to the Netherlands, see page 25.

In Armenia and Albania, delegation members, in the light of notes gathered in Hungary and the Czech Republic, encouraged their respective governments to set up government offices for national minorities as soon as possible. Studies for that purpose are under way.

The members of the Georgian delegation in Austria said they would encourage Georgia to sign and ratify speedily the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities<sup>17</sup>.

One of the findings of the report on the Lithuanian study visit to Belgium and the European institutions (the European Parliament and the Council of Europe) was that the process of ratifying the framework Convention needed speeding up. Lithuania has just deposited its ratification instrument (on 23 March 2000).

Poland, which is in a comparable situation, is to hold a regional conference on national minorities at the Sejm in May 2000 with a view to speeding up ratification of the framework convention, as announced in the report following the visit to Austria.

On the basis of French experience of separation of church and state, as being quite helpful in promoting good relations between churches when these are placed on an equal footing, the Moldovan experts are hoping to develop relations of this kind in Moldova and thus resolve certain tensions.

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<sup>16</sup> A study visit by a Hungarian delegation on the role and operation of advisory bodies representing minorities (Lapps, Roma/Gypsies, Swedes, etc) is scheduled for April 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Georgia signed the framework convention on 21 January 2000.

## **PROJECT VII**

### ***Vocational training***

- Activity VII.1**      **Training for staff of the Romanian government service for the protection of national minorities**  
*Activity to be financed by the European Commission*
- Activity VII.2**      **Technical assistance with setting up and maintaining Internet sites on national minorities**  
*Token entry*

### **General remarks**

In view of recent large turnover of staff in the Romanian government's Service for the Protection of National Minorities and recent internal reorganisation in it, it is not certain that Activity VII.1 can be carried through before the end of the Joint Programme.

However the Hungarian Office for National and Ethnic Minorities has been able to give other similar bodies the benefit of its experience of setting up a website on government sources of information on national minorities with links to other websites (of NGOs, international organisations, etc).

Ensuring that each government office in the Joint Programme has a site of this kind is one of the objectives of a new project (see conclusions to this report) which will build a network so that the Internet provides an extension of what the Joint Programme has achieved on the ground (though the Internet phase will take rather longer) - namely connecting up government offices with one another and linking them to civil society and European organisations.



## PROJECT VIII

### *Publicity and publications (financed by the European Commission)*

#### General remarks on publicity

It was agreed that the new Joint Programme would make more room for publicity. Amounts committed so far are rather small and fail to reflect all the efforts which have been made to give this Programme more publicity. It has been publicised as follows:

1. **Newsletter on the Joint Programme.** The first issue appeared in August 1999, with a revision at the end of September. The newsletter, a copy of which is appended hereto, is aimed not only at keeping national correspondents informed of Joint Programme activities and developments generally, but also at informing the public about the Joint Programme. The newsletter provides a summary of Joint Programme activities, brief information about activities ahead and, lastly, information about publications relating to the Joint Programme.

The newsletter has been a great success. To begin with it was issued to national correspondents of the Joint Programme, participants (and international experts taking part) in the activities, and invited NGOs. It was likewise circulated to colleagues, who, in turn, circulated it through their own network of contacts, as well as being sent to Mr Arturo Rodriguez of the European Foundation for Human Rights, whom the European Commission put in charge of supervising conduct of the programme. Since then, universities, libraries, minorities' organisations, NGOs, postgraduate students and teachers in Europe and elsewhere (Canada, Australia and the United States) have asked to be sent the newsletter. The next issue is due out shortly and an effort will be made to draw up a full mailing list based on requests received.

2. **Press releases.** Although press releases have not been issued routinely, there were a number of press releases in 1999 on various activities in the Joint Programme, keeping the European Commission-Council of Europe joint work on protection of national minorities in the public eye. A press release was issued for the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of government offices for national minorities, which launched the new programme. A number of people have contacted us for information<sup>18</sup>.
3. **Internet sites on minorities.** The web is the ideal way of circulating information, and pending an Internet site of our own various partners with sites about minorities have relayed information about the activities in the Joint Programme. The site most used has been that of *Baltic Insight/MINELRES* (<http://www.riga.lv/minelres>). However NGOs have likewise put out announcements about Joint Programme activities on their sites, in particular activities they had been invited to take part in. The *Greek-Helsinki Committee*, the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), Metropolis and *MRG International* are four examples.

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<sup>18</sup> Some organisations, such as a Basque association based in Brussels, have telephoned to express interest in the programme and to ask to be invited to take part in activities.

4. The Council of Europe Directorate General of Human Rights has just started a **web page** (<http://www.humanrights.coe.int/minorities/index.htm>) on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and intergovernmental activities concerning minorities. The site includes information about the Joint Programme (a general presentation, the activity schedule, newsletters, etc). It is planned to set up a link with the European Commission site.
5. **Video reports** on various activities (the Estonian study visit to the Netherlands in June 1999 and the seminar on the media in Tallinn), which are available from the Directorate General of Human Rights. The report filmed in the Netherlands was shown on Estonian television as part of a weekly broadcast in Russian. Clear reference was made to the Joint Programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe.
6. **Audio recordings** of seminar discussions (Zagreb, Szeged, etc), which can be used, if appropriate, for publishing reports of the seminars.

Clearly considerable efforts have been and are being made to bring the Joint Programme to the attention of the general public and the relevant government authorities. However it has not so far been possible to take any special action using the funds earmarked by the European Commission, for lack of human resources and detailed proposals. A special Internet site on the Joint Programme would have been a worthwhile project if activity proposals had included clear plans for one. In mid-programme, and given the already large number of activities, such a project is no longer feasible, particularly as it would require numerous mid-programme agreements, with regard both to content and form, between the two European organisations and the partner governments (however, see conclusions to the present report).

#### **General remarks on publications**

Part of the amount allocated to Project VIII was used for translating the first newsletter into French. Other expenditure is planned, such as translating the present report into English. The conclusions of the seminar on media and minorities in Estonia, "The role of the media in Estonia in the process of joining the European Union", may be published and could likewise be translated.

For the record, a publication has been brought out on minority participation in decision-making. It is based on papers delivered by participants and experts at the seminar in Brdo, Slovenia, in December 1997, and the replies to a questionnaire on minority participation at various levels. The publication is available in its English version (stocks are limited), from the Council of Europe or the Slovenian organisers (the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the government Office for National Minorities and the Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana).

It would be a pity if no systematic use were made of all the information on protection of national minorities, ranging from expert analysis to information about good practice, which has been fed into the Joint Programme. A collection of documents (meeting reports, expert papers, programmes, lists of participants) could be published when the programme is complete if funding is available.

#### IV. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 2000

13-17 March (postponed)	Study visit by three Bulgarian experts to the United Kingdom to look at implementation of the framework convention and the process of drawing up national reports (it is possible the visit will be to Hungary or that it will be replaced by an information meeting in Bulgaria on the framework convention, attended by specialists from other countries which have ratified the convention and submitted their national reports).
21 and 22 March, Chişinău	International conference in Moldova on social integration of minorities (with a view to drawing up a national strategy on social integration).
3-7 April, Helsinki	Study visit by four Hungarian experts to Finland on the role and operation of advisory committees for minorities (Lapps, Roma/Gypsies and other minorities such as the Swedish one).
3-7 May, Budapest	Workshop on Roma/Gypsy matters in Hungary (education, welfare programmes, housing, access to the labour market, problems of image and discrimination), to be attended by Hungarian, Finnish, Spanish (Andalusian), Ukrainian and Bulgarian experts.
12-13 May, Predeal	Multilateral seminar in Romania on protection and participation of national minorities (through NGOs and public institutions, in particular parliamentary ones) as a condition for successful European integration. Participants from Romania, Germany, Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia.
15 and 16 May, Warsaw and Pulawy (postponed)	Regional conference in Poland on the status of national minorities in the European context. Participants from Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Lithuania, Germany and the Czech Republic.
19 and 20 May, Opatija	Regional seminar in Croatia, "Minorities: a bridge between cultures", aimed at promoting crossborder cultural exchange (festivals, etc) and signature of bilateral agreements on minorities where none yet exist. Participants from Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
22 and 23 May, Brdo	Multilateral seminar in Slovenia on national minorities' role and participation in bilateral relations. Participants from Slovenia, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Croatia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria.
12 and 13 June, Riga	7 <sup>th</sup> meeting of government offices for national minorities, in Latvia. Council of Europe member states and applicant countries are invited.
<i>To be confirmed</i>	<i>Training workshop for journalists in Ukraine, attended by Ukrainian, and probably Moldovan, journalists.</i>
<i>To be confirmed</i>	<i>Study visit by young Romanian NGO representatives and a representative of the Romanian Department for the Protection of National Minorities to the United Kingdom or the Netherlands to provide stimulus to NGOs representing minorities in Romania.</i>

## V. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Although the Joint Programme is not yet complete, with around one-third of the activities still to be conducted, it is possible to make a preliminary evaluation. A number of lessons can be learned from the activities already conducted and, all in all, the first evaluation can be considered highly encouraging, given:

- growing participation by European countries in the programme;
- the satisfaction expressed almost unanimously by organisers and participants concerning the activities;
- the programme's undoubted value from the standpoint of harmonisation of law in Europe, greater co-operation between governments and effective participation by civil society in decision making.

The main lessons to be learned from the programme are:

1. it is vital to keep going the meetings of government offices for national minorities, whether in their present form or by combining them at least partly with DH-MIN meetings<sup>19</sup>;
2. NGOs should take more part in the Joint Programme, including the meetings for government offices for national minorities (a number of NGOs could be invited right away to attend the meeting in Latvia) or by means of a parallel series of trans-European meetings for NGOs representing minorities. It is essential to encourage national organisations for minorities to open up to Europe and work at the pan-European level;
3. the principle of drawing up a list of national correspondents to act as liaison between the Council of Europe and government bodies in their countries is sound. In the interests of transparency, however, selection of participants from NGOs could be done by a shadow national correspondent from civil society<sup>20</sup> in consultation with the government correspondent;
4. if a new project on minorities comes to pass, the pan-European character of the programme needs keeping, in particular for the meetings of government offices, though most activities would be refocused on particular geographical areas deserving more attention at the start of the millennium (south-eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, with particular emphasis on Russia). The new machinery would nonetheless have to leave a little margin for manoeuvre (reserve funds) so that, if appropriate, and to deal with issues judged to be priority ones, funding could be made available for ad hoc activities in countries not covered by the redrawing of priorities (for example, activities in central Europe or the Baltic countries);

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<sup>19</sup> See information about these activities, pages 22 and 23.

<sup>20</sup> For example, the Chair of a (non-governmental) council for national minorities or the Chair of a movement in which most minorities were represented and which therefore spoke legitimately for a large number of minority groups.

5. to modernise and adapt exchange and co-operation between government offices for national minorities, it would be a good idea, if a minorities project came to pass, to develop websites for all the government offices, if need be paying for visits by specialists to help governments set up the sites. The sites would then be networked, with linkage to other partners (mainly sites of national or international NGOs and sites of international organisations such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe and OSCE-HCNM).