

Eu membership as a factor for harmonization of ethnic relations within the Countries of Union

The author emphasizes that some of the post-Communist states have not grown out of ethnic conflicts, antagonism and enmity, which break peaceful life, ruin public relations, cause considerable human losses and streams of refugees. For their peaceful settlement countries must develop models of ethnic relations harmonization. The author focuses on three issues, which contribute to the outbreaks of conflicts: the thing which causes conflicts is not ethnic affiliation, but nationality, officially defined by the USSR, and this should be left behind; internal borders (nowadays state frontiers) established by the USSR for expansion and strengthening of authoritarianism, which now often stir up disputes; a level of ethnic violence in the post-Soviet countries is comparatively low. Materials on protection of minority rights in ten CEE countries-members of the EU testify that the potential of joining the EU as a catalyst for reforms must be analyzed more thoroughly. The EU possesses resources and possibilities to use the process of integration for constructive settlement of invisible and threatening problems in the continent.

Keywords: the European Union, harmonization of ethnic relations, minority rights, post-Communist CEE countries, ethnic conflicts.

Членство в ЄС як фактор гармонізації етнічних відносин у Країнах Спільноти

Автор наголошує, що деякі посткомуністичні держави ще не позбулись етнічних конфліктів, неприязні, ворожнечі, які порушують мирне життя, руйнують суспільні відносини, спричиняють значні людські жертви та потоки біженців. Для їх мирного вирішення держави повинні розвивати моделі гармонізації етнічних відносин. Автор розглядає три моменти, які спричиняють розгортання конфліктів: те, що викликає конфлікти – не етнічна належність, а національність, офіційно визначена СРСР, від чого слід відійти; внутрішні кордони (нині державні) створені СРСР для поширення й зміцнення авторитаризму, тепер часто викликають суперечності; рівень етнічного насильства на пострадянських теренах, відносно невисокий. Документи про стан захисту прав меншин у десяти країнах ЄС з ЦСЄ свідчать, що потенціал процесу вступу як

катализатора реформ слід задіяти повніше. ЄС має ресурси і можливості, щоб використати процес інтеграції для конструктивного вирішення прихованих і загрозливих проблем на континенті.

Ключові слова: Європейський Союз, гармонізація етнічних відносин, права меншин, посткомуністичні країни ЦСЄ, етнічні конфлікти.

Over the last years more than once has the world been shocked by the outbreaks of ethnic conflicts across the post-Communist and post-Soviet territory, which disturbed peaceful way of life, ruined public relations, caused considerable human losses and streams of refugees. The reasons, which gave rise to them, are numerous, and apparently every researcher can add their own views. We suppose that at least three factors are worth mentioning. First of all, what we face in the abovementioned region is not ethnic affiliation in its usual understanding, but nationality, officially, territorially and regularly determined by the USSR. Secondly, internal borders which turned into national frontiers were established by the USSR for expansion and strengthening of authoritarianism. Thirdly, one should remember that despite the views of many experts, a level of ethnic violence across the post-Soviet area is comparatively average.

It is necessary to mention that in 10 out of 15 former Soviet republics there have been no records of interethnic violence, however in Russia and Moldova such violence is inherent to some limited regions. Only in three Transcaucasian countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia) and Ukraine the outrage has become full-scale (continuous conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh region, the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict etc.). Despite this relative calmness, the risk of interethnic conflicts is not only affecting the neighboring countries, but also is constantly growing. Undoubtedly, this influence is being felt in Ukraine now, though the events happening in the east of Ukraine should not be ascribed to this category, as it is not an ethnic, but a political conflict¹. V. O. Kotygorenko, who devoted his doctoral research to the analysis of ethnic antagonisms and conflicts in Ukraine, points out that the nature, content and dynamics of these phenomena are stipulated by the heritage of the communist system, specificity of ethno-demographic and ethno-social developments of the Ukrainian society, peculiarities of national economy and politics, culture and social consciousness and psychology, geo-political and civilized challenges of the present time, actualization of ethnic communities in demonstrating and defending their interests during and after the process of achieving by Ukraine its independence².

Ethnic conflicts, usually, derive from an abrupt surge of ethnic nationalism in Central-Eastern European countries. In the world public nationalism is generally treated as a positive

¹ Лабаури Д. Донбаскiй разлом: причини, суть, iтогi конфлiкта на Юго-Востоке України/Д. Лабаури[Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: <http://www.warandpeace.ru/ru/analysis/view/98169/>

² Котигоренко В.О. Етнічні протиріччя і конфлікти в сучасній Україні: політологічний концепт // Автореф. дис... д-ра політ. наук: 23.00.05 / В.О. Котигоренко; НАН України. ІДіП ім. В.М.Корещького. – К., 2005. – С. 1.

phenomenon, though it is inherent to the old European democracies and only to some extent is being revealed in the post-Communist countries. Thus, prevention of conflicts, settlement of conflict situations and ethnic divergences, averting of their escalation in an open form, will contribute to elaboration of a model of ethnic relations harmonization in the post-Communist and post-Soviet countries, which have already become the members of the European Union. This is quite a complicated problem, which can be solved rather at a theoretical level, than practically, and at the same time it is current, as well as the analyses of the very process.

The aim of the given paper is to analyze frozen conflicts in Central-Eastern European countries and the interrelated problem of harmonization of ethnic and national relations within new members of the EU. The author deals with the main approaches, strategies and models of theoretical understanding of ethnic conflicts in present day period.

Transitional process and reorientation towards Western Europe are two crucial challenges faced by CEE countries, which declared their wish to join the European Union³. If in the early 90s transition from the socialistic ideology and that time political system to the plurality of ideas and from the system of centralized planning to the market economy were the main goals of social and economic policies, then at the beginning of the 21st century the demands for closer integration with western European countries have become of great importance. The prospect of the EU membership gave CEE countries an opportunity to transform themselves much from the “grey zone” to the countries with steady democratic principles and rather functional market economy over a short period of time. The EU set a number of requirements before countries-candidates, to be adhered to in the course of democratization and finally fulfilled, to obtain concurrence of the EU members as to joining the community: to ensure stability of the institutions, which guarantee democracy, rule of law, human rights, as well as respect and security of national and ethnical minorities⁴.

Membership of the European community imposes some liabilities on every EU member's policy, in particular as to national minorities. Thus, the European Union made demands on obligatory adherence to the European standards of national minority development, ensuring their rights, including rights for language use and development, cultural heritage, own traditions and customs. Within the EU there is an elaborated model of harmonizing relations between national and ethnic minorities and all countries-members must follow its conditions and create bodies, responsible for actualization of liabilities, concerning adherence to the rights of national minorities. The EU extremely carefully and constantly analyses these issues, aiming at prevention of interethnic conflicts, which are still smoldering in many countries.

Since determination of state-candidates for joining the EU, it initiated preparation of candidates, to identify their correspondence to certain criteria and elimination of visible drawbacks.

³ Арон Р. Демократия и тоталитаризм / Р. Арон. – М.: Текст, 1993. – С. 6.

⁴ Институт Открытого Общества. Мониторинг процесса вступления в ЕС. Защита машин. 2001 г. [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: www.politika.lv/index.php?f=300

In 2000 the EU Accession monitoring program, elaborated by the Open Society Institute, started its activity and contributed to the independent process of the EU examination of membership applications from ten CEE countries-candidates. Enlargement of the EU is a positive phenomenon and independent monitoring became one of the means, which let it strengthen its favorable influence both upon countries-candidates and the European Union itself.

Taking into account general orientation of the Open Society Institute (OSI), the program conducted monitoring on the basis of political criteria of the EU membership, determined by the Council of the European Union in Copenhagen in 1993⁵, which were mentioned above. To determine more specific monitoring issues, Regular reports were analyzed, and the Commission itself highlighted some aspects of political criteria of minority rights, independence of judges and corruption. Monitoring was conducted as to the fifth issue, which is of the same importance for the Commission and the Open Society Institute: equal rights for both men and women.

Monitoring report on every country was prepared by independent experts or methodology organizations, elaborated by the OSI, together with the international consultative council. This methodology is based on current international standards in the sphere of minority rights protection, and draws the boundaries of corresponding legislation, institutions and practice within countries-candidates. Usage of the “protection of minority” category is explained by the fact that the Programs copied the European Commission’s approach towards this issue, at the same time dealing with the problem of discrimination, minority rights, including national minority rights for keeping their identity, language, culture. Like the Commission’s regular reports, the Monitoring programs’ reports focused on condition of Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia, on condition of the Gypsy population in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Investigation of the condition of one national minority, as the Program representatives believe, is necessary to underline universality of the existing standards for all national minorities across Europe⁶.

First draft of every report was reviewed by experts from a specific state and the international consultative council. After that, 8 out of 10 countries-candidates conducted round table negotiations to have the prepared reports widely discussed and criticized and commented by state institutions’ experts, public organizations, minority representatives, as well as delegations of the European Commission. In the countries, where it was not possible to conduct such round-table talks, experts received provisional versions of the document. Final versions of reports became the result of considerable and profound improvement, on the basis of comments and criticism, received in the course of discussions.

It is historically established that in every part of Europe live various national minorities, which actively defend their ethnic identity. They act in different ways: some use statutory

⁵ Accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria) [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://n-europe.eu/glossary/term/47>

⁶ Институт Открытого Общества. Мониторинг процесса вступления в ЕС. Защита машин. 2001 г. [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: www.politika.lv/index.php?f=300

methods, other terroristic mechanisms of putting pressure on their governments. The example is Spain, where the Basque nationalistic organization ETA often stages attacks on current politicians, and even made an attempt of the state revolution (1981). Three historical regions (Catalonia – 1977, the Basque country and Galicia – 1978) gained autonomy, which was provided them by the Republican Spain. However, the achieved status did not satisfy the regions and they carry on raising the issue of national self-determination. Among three historical “nations without countries” the Galicians do not want their own state, as they have fully integrated into Spanish political structure, though strive for a higher status; the Catalans fight for their right for federation, trying to raise the role of Catalonia in it, but they do not put a question of exiting Spain; while the Basques separatists set up radical claims – creation of an independent Basque country, composing of 7 provinces, including 3 French and Navarre – cradle of the Basque people⁷.

National and ethnic minorities, which reside compactly in these or those regions of Europe, and as a rule, require special protection. This problem has been rising since the early 90s of the 20th century, when in CEE countries, the movement for confirmation/gaining of independence and sovereignty was commenced. Actualization of the problem made the Council of the European Union to adopt Directives on Anti-Discrimination Policy 2000/43/EU “Implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment Irrespective of Racial or Ethnic Origin”, aimed at protection of national minority rights. Actualizing this legislative mechanism, all European Union member-states must actively implement the policy, which stimulate participation of national and ethnic minorities in public life, including politics. First of all, it concerned social policy, which required means of equaling chances for minority representatives like occupational or public sphere discrimination. Clear requirements from the European Union bodies matter much for the countries-candidates. Adoption and implementation at the national level models of relation harmonization between ethnic and national communities, which included legislative and institutional mechanisms that protect minority right, became a crucial rating of political readiness of the country to its membership (as a part of the list of the Copenhagen criteria⁸).

Let us mention, that for example Poland as a country-candidate, taking into account all specificity of its national composition, did not face any difficulties as to the model of state policy in the sphere of ethnic minorities, and the governmental circles of such countries as Lithuania (the problem of Lithuanian citizenship for representatives of national minorities, which do not speak the Lithuanian language, these are mainly Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians), Estonia (the problem of teaching Russian in schools)⁹, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (persecution of the Gypsies) – mainly suffered due to implementation of the model of harmonious development, contributing to the Open Society Institute’s Monitoring Program. It is quite clear, as

⁷ Орлов В.В. Единая и неидеальная родина всех испанцев / В.В. Орлов // *Международная жизнь*. – 1998. – № 7. – С. 36.

⁸ Accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria) [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://n-europe.eu/glossary/term/47>

⁹ Этническая политика в странах Балтии. – М.: Наука, 2013. – 408 с.

the adoption of new legislation by these countries, which would meet the criteria of the European Union in the sphere of national minority rights, does not mean that they would be fully implemented in practice. Besides, the European Union conducted its monitoring in the light of the proposed approach to the issue, i.e. the model of harmonization of ethnic and national relations. There were no common, unified standards and institutional requirements, and it was usually believed that every country must ensure the achievement of goals, recorded in *acquis communautaire*. Such approach to the ethnic and national policy of the state-members is presupposed, first of all, by the fact that enlargement of the European integration process towards the east caused within the European Union the necessity to solve new problems in the sphere of national minorities.

It is known that Slovakia had some difficulties with ensuring rights of the Hungarian national minority, and the same problems apparently existed in Romania and Serbia. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia felt some concern as to politically conscious and powerful Russian national minority.

However, the European Union set certain requirements in front of the state-candidates of the fifth wave of enlargement in 2004, among which rather important was to implement the European model of adhering and ensuring national minority rights, but every country chose its own way of its realization. Thus, there is no single ethnic and political policy and CEE countries have their own peculiarities due to their historical stipulation and modern problems, which arose before every country. Some countries specifically elaborated new legislation, adopted corresponding laws on protection of national and ethnic minority rights, established separate institutions aimed at settling specific national issues. In particular, some countries-candidates, including Hungary, adopted laws on national and ethnic minority rights¹⁰. It is quite possible that Poland did not need that due to a high level of homogeneity of its society (though there were some attempts to pass the law on the status of national minorities), and Romania (which proposed seven corresponding bills on national minorities, and submitted none for consideration of the parliament) could not adopt any. Therefore, their ethnic and national policy in general and settling of specific problems are regulated by a mass of national laws, which include separate articles on national minorities, and besides are based on various international acts.

The ethnic and national issue is quite urgent for the European Union, first of all due to the legal grounds of its ensuring. Scientists and practitioners, who deal with the abovementioned problems, discuss two contrary approaches¹¹. Adherents of the first one suppose it is necessary that strict standards, recorded in the international documents on protection of national minority rights should be established and every country should execute them. Representatives of this approach, giving grounds for their ideas, emphasize that rights of national and ethnical

¹⁰ Кіссе А. Виборча система як засіб врегулювання етнічних конфліктів / А. Кіссе // *Політичний менеджмент*. – 2006. – № 2 (17). – С. 109.

¹¹ Варфалави А. Осуществление прав национальных и этнических меньшинств / А. Варфалави // *Официальный сайт Научно-исследовательского института социальных систем [Електронний ресурс]*. – Режим доступу: http://niiss.ru/mag13_natrights.shtml

minorities belong to the people's main rights and must be protected in accordance with the international standards. Followers of the second approach mention, that adjusting of minority rights is an internal concern of the country where they live and, consequently, must be regulated solely by their internal, national legislations. They highlight that conditions of minorities in various countries differ, thus there is no need, or even it is impossible to introduce one common system of rules at the international level. Therefore, it should be mentioned that international documents, which directly concern the rights of national minorities have only recommended character, and the crucial point for national and ethnic minorities is country's internal legislation, and corresponding subordinate acts, which regulate their implementation into public relations.

At the same time, CEE countries, which in 2004 and 2007 became the EU members, confirmed their correspondence to democratic requirements, as opposed to other post-Communist countries, hence their legislation and practice of implementation also correspond to democratic principles.

Nowadays, the European Union pays much attention to the Gypsy minority within CEE countries¹². Condition of the Gypsies, or as it is appropriate to call them the Roma people, from time to time attracts attention of mass media. Social adaptation and emancipation of the Roma ethnic group within these countries requires complex solution, and this idea is generally backed up by all, however it is harder to implement this into life, than just to acknowledge the problem. In any case, the problem is continuous, frequent escalation of situation, skirmish between the Roma and representatives of other nationalities or inside the Roma communities themselves, and sometimes requires urgent state interference.

The last example of such situation took place in Hungary, where the problem of the Roma has always been rather acute. The Gypsies, however make up 8-10% of population, but their social status has always been difficult, despite such population size. Relations between the Roma and title nation – Hungarians have always left much to be desired, but in the early 2009 they escalated a lot. It happened when a group of the Gypsies attacked one of the bars in Veszprem city and put up a fight, and the accidental victim was Romanian handball player Marian Cozma, who played for the local team. Two other players of the club were wounded. After that the city was seized by a wave of anti-Roma protests, which almost ended with mass disorders. The tragedy in Veszprem touched the whole country. Mass media recalled that groups of Roma drug dealers for a long time had been terrorized resorts near Balaton Lake paying no attention to the local police. The consequences of the events which took place in Veszprem city were a number of murders and arsons, committed on the ground of racial hatred. From that time

¹² Сорос Дж. Тяжелое положение циган [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://inosmi.ru/europe/20100826/162461059.html>; Общее пространство внутренней безопасности в ЕС: политические аспекты. / Отв. ред. – С.В. Уткин. – М.: ИМЭМО РАН, 2011. – 146 с.; Национальный вопрос в ЕС: французы снова изгоняют циган [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://www.odnako.org/blogs/nacionalniy-vopros-v-es-francuzi-snova-izgonyayut-cigan/>

on, the “Roma question” is the main topic for all fierce disputes and political debates in the country, which to some extent is in the doldrums¹³.

Thus, let us mention, that in Hungary leave 10 million people, among which 800 000 Gypsies, which belong to three different tribes. The Hungarian gypsies, to a rare exclusion, lost permanent work, since the time of the previous regime transformation. Economic structure, under the influence of changes, which took place in the country, scaled down heavy industry, where Gypsies, without any qualifications, often even without finishing a class or two in elementary school, could find at least some work and miserable earnings. Over 26 years there appeared generations, which have not seen their parents working or their siblings studying¹⁴. Gas and electricity in Gypsies’ houses were cut off long ago for non-payment. Thus, under this condition the Gypsies see only one way out, i.e. to give birth to as many children as possible and to receive as much allowance from the state as possible. The worst thing is that the Gypsies became “a small coin” in political games. Left-wing socialists and liberals grant Gypsy communities huge funds. But it became apparent that this financial aid goes to Gypsy leaders’ pockets. Some of these people were persecuted for embezzlement of money. However, the Hungarian international journalist Agnes Gereben writes, that they can be seen now on the screen, and they proudly head protest demonstrations against Hungarian racism¹⁵. Thus, Hungary is not able to solve this problem of ethnic harmonization of society alone, though the EU has been strictly putting these questions since the period of Hungarian preparation for joining the union.

To the north, Hungary borders on Slovakia, which once was an agrarian province of the Kingdom of Hungary, and in fact, was called Upper Hungary, and it became Slovakia only as a part of the First Republic in Czechoslovakia, that is together with the Czechs¹⁶. Nowadays, Slovakia is the EU member, and its level of development has grown considerably. In Slovakia, as well as in Hungary, there is an exclusively large percent of the Roma population, but the situation is absolutely different from that in Hungary. Slovakia, containing a huge Gypsy national minority, pays great attention to the events, concerning the Gypsies in neighboring countries, and tries to bridge possible diversities and challenges. But it should be taken into account that relations between Slovakia and Hungary are rather tense, especially when it goes about ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia. And the events happening with other national minorities in Hungary is usually used in Slovakia for political struggle. For Slovakian nationalists it is another favorable opportunity to accuse Hungarians of hostile treatment towards minority representatives, which live in this country, and not only towards the Slovaks, but also the Gypsies. Several years ago, due to the fact that the government changed the procedure of social welfare payment, in eastern part of Slovakia there

¹³ Лагунина И. Почему обострились проблемы цыган в Восточной Европе / И. Лагунина [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/transcript/1504888.html>

¹⁴ Верлюиз П. Тяжело ли цыганам в Венгрии? / Пьер Верлюиз [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://inosmi.ru/world/20130319/207111619.html>

¹⁵ Gereben Á. Olvasóink reflexiói / *Agnes Gereben // Magyar Hírlap. – 2009. – 22 május.*

¹⁶ Федорчак Т.П. Становлення і політичний розвиток Першої Республіки в Чехословаччині / Т.П. Федорчак // Вісник Харківського національного університету імені В. Н. Каразіна «Питання політології». – Харків, 2009. – № 861. – Випуск 15. – С. 239.

were some Gypsy disorders. And the government had to bring troops in the region¹⁷. In August 2015 in the Kosice region, in town Spisska Nova Ves took place clashes between gypsies and the police. About 200 men and guys of Gypsy nationality refused to adhere to the police demands to stop drunken bash. As a result of clashes 9 Gypsy men and 7 policemen were injured. The police executive of the Kosice region informed that it was the 25th clash with the police forces in this region of Slovakia. The most problematic region is Eastern Slovakia, where social and economic situation is even worse than in the west, where the number of gypsies is higher.

Current Slovakian government made significant adjustments to the approach of solving the so-called Roma problem, as the previous government usually conducted social integration policy of Gypsy communities. Let us underline, that in Slovakia there is a great distinction between the levels of social integration of different Roma communities. Therefore, the government focuses on a differentiated approach to various groups of the Roma population, first of all on raising the status of a segregated part. Current government tries to solve this problem differently. Acting government (formed after the elections on March 5, 2016) includes a number of nationally oriented or nationalistic parties, with sharply identified anti-Hungarian orientation and some of these parties wish to increase the percentage of the Roma population in the country, that is, they orientated themselves in their policy at strengthening of national identity, to lower the percentage of the Hungarian population, and are strictly against the Roma¹⁸. A great number of the Slovakian Roma identify themselves with the Hungarians, as they speak the Hungarian language. That is why the government tries to lower the amount of the Hungarian population by means of raising the percentage of the Roma.

We suppose, that such kind of policy does not correspond to the social requirements of the Roma ethnos, as the social part of the problem predominates over identification, and nowadays it is nonsense even to try and solve this problem only by means of raising the Roma self-consciousness, it is a short-sighted position, which does not lead to solution of global problems, integrated with poverty, low social status, insufficient level of education and difficult situation in the sphere of health care for Gypsy population. Therefore, namely these issues have to be solved before everything else.

In neighboring Czech Republic, for instance, one can witness such phenomenon as ghettoization of the Gypsy population; it means foundation of special places for their compact inhabitancy. In Slovakia there is a similar problem, and it raises concern among politicians and other nations' and ethno-communities' representatives that such districts will become real hotbeds of disorders, various forms of civil disobedience, criminality and so on. Such examples are numerous and exist in other countries-members of the EU, like Bulgaria and Romania¹⁹.

¹⁷ «Кочевники Европы». Цыгане, власть и общество в восточноевропейских странах [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://topwar.ru/89371-kochevniki-evropy-cygane-vlast-i-obschestvo-v-vostochnoevropeyskih-stranah.html>

¹⁸ Програмапартии «Наша Словакия» часть 1 [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://new.vk.com/wall-89890057_5376

¹⁹ «Кочевники Европы». Цыгане, власть и общество в восточноевропейских странах [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://topwar.ru/89371-kochevniki-evropy-cygane-vlast-i-obschestvo-v-vostochnoevropeyskih-stranah.html>

The head of Bratislava Institute for Social Issues G. Mesezhnikov stated that one third of the Roma population in Slovakia live rather compactly in poor communities. The level of social services is quite low. Contacts with the non-Gypsy people are limited. Public opinion survey testifies that the indices of the so-called social distance of the non-Roma population towards the Roma people are extremely high, and this escalates the situations, when under various unfavorable political conditions, the risk of mass disorders is substantial. Talking about this issue there is no sense to rely upon Western Europe, as they have their own ranges of challenges, however in fact there is no problem of the Roma population there. At the same time, one can boldly predict, that a common wise solution of the problem can be found only at the Europe-wide level, but not at a separate local one.

Thus, let us mention, that a way towards harmonization of ethnic and national relations in the countries EU-members is not absolutely completed. The model of ethnic and national relations development is already theoretically elaborated; however it is quite difficult to find its affirmation in practice. The research conducted by the Open Society Institute, Monitoring Program and conclusions of the European Union Commission on Problems of discrimination and minority rights give us an opportunity to use current experience to advantage. Analyzed materials on protection of national minority rights in 10 CEE countries-members of the European Union include conclusions and proposals as to the potential of the EU membership to serve a catalyst for reforms, which must be analyzed more thoroughly. The European Union must clearly articulate the model of harmonization of ethnical and national relations and standards, which countries-candidates and the EU members should correspond to, if they want to fulfill all political criteria for membership in the sphere of protection of national minorities. At the same time, the governments of the countries-candidates must show all their resolve in the matter of elaboration and implementation of sound minority rights policy. Minorities and other representatives of civil society must be consciously engaged in elaboration, conduction and evaluation of this policy. Failure to protect minority rights is similar to neglecting a volcano. Tension, caused by the problems of political, cultural and economic life of minorities, is often left unmentioned till the time, when the explosion brings them to the public debate. We suppose that the EU possesses resources and possibilities to use the process of integration for constructive settlement of invisible and threatening problems in the continent.