

My name is Anna Frangoudaki, a sociologist, professor at the University of Athens, Greece. I would like to thank Ms Gay McDougal for inviting me as independent expert.

This forum is of great social significance, because respecting the rights of all minorities is fundamental for the future of all societies. It is not serving interests of the sole minorities, but it is protecting the entire society.

In this direction, there are two points I would like to make, the importance of positive discrimination, and the fundamental role of education.

The right of Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities to participate in economic life is strongly related with their right to education.

Lack of education can be crucial for economic marginalisation, especially in European societies, where compulsory education for all is a reality, except for some such Roma as the

The Roma in Greece appear to be a group very inventive in economic initiatives, mainly commercial ones. The Roma cannot be involved in any kind of economic activity, set up a small business where they could enjoy economic success, because they do not hold a compulsory education diploma, necessary in legally heading any private economic initiative.

Moreover, the economic rights of any minority are closely related to the capacity of individuals to handle the codes of communication proper for social and economic relations. The competence to use such codes is also acquired in schools.

If individuals do not manage to communicate in the accepted codes, they immediately fulfil the prophecy of inferiority associated with their minority identity.

In other words, participation in economic life in equal terms is not possible for Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities, as long as they are, through positive discrimination measures, given the opportunity to bridge the gap of education at least for their children and youth.