

For example, during the first few years of Ukraine's independence the implementation of Ukraine's language legislation was ignored or neglected in certain regions of the country. However, as Ukraine's central government attempts to enforce its authority throughout the country it is running into increasing opposition from local bureaucracies which are reluctant to implement this legislation, and which are supported by much of the local population. The ambiguities (some of them probably intentional) which, until recently, allowed for a certain "creative anarchy" in the sphere of language policy will inevitably have to be clarified, and this is bound to lead to numerous disagreements and conflict in the years to come.

In addition, nationalist extremism still poses a certain threat to inter-ethnic harmony. To date the advocates of extremist forms of Ukrainian and Russian nationalism have played a marginal role in Ukraine's domestic politics, but they have managed to maintain a base of public support in some regions of the country. If the socio-economic situation in Ukraine deteriorates further, and ethnic demagogues attempt to take advantage of ever-present ethnic tensions, the base of support for extremism could grow. The possibility that such a threat could emerge is further amplified by the poor state of Ukraine's legal infrastructure. Its deficiencies have hampered attempts to counter the activities of extremist groups and prosecute cases of discrimination on the basis of ethnic background.

Ukraine's government officials and community leaders, at both the central and local levels, often lack the skills needed to cope with the challenges related to ethnic diversity. In contrast Canada, with its well-known policy of multiculturalism, has accumulated a great deal of highly-respected expertise dealing with issues which are of crucial importance in the development of Ukraine's regional and minority policies. The Canadian experience differs in many respects from that of Ukraine. However, many Canadian officials and scholars interested in these topics have closely studied and benefitted from the experience of foreign countries, and can easily relate to the situation in Ukraine. In addition the Canadian multicultural experience has a special significance for Ukraine because of the large community of Canadians of Ukrainian background.

Background: Why the Focus on Crimea?

The project's Crimean programme differed substantially from the Kyiv programme. The original intention of the organizers was to maintain the rough format of the Kyiv seminar, but adapt and abbreviate it to suit local circumstances by focussing on the themes most relevant to the Crimean situation. However, in the course of our preparations the very distinctive nature of inter-ethnic relations in Crimea became increasingly obvious. In addition, representatives of several NGOs in Kyiv and Crimea specifically requested that the Canadian team do everything possible to become fully acquainted with the situation in Crimea, and the specific difficulties faced by the Crimean Tatars, so that we could then suggest ways in which governmental and non-governmental