

Introduction

There are few venues in Central/Eastern Europe for frank and open discussion of issues such as language, education and citizenship policy; immigrant and refugee integration; and strategies for promoting tolerance and dealing with regional inequalities. This gap can partly be filled by specialized seminars on these topics, combined with the appropriate follow-up activities. If they are tailored to the specific needs of individual countries and selected audiences, and keep in mind the particular challenges of the post-communist transition period, such programs can play a significant role in promoting the emergence of more open and tolerant societies.

In 1995 "Forum Eastern Europe," an international research group, initiated an open-ended project entitled "Managing Diversity in Plural Societies". The general aims of this project are as follows:

- 1) To promote Canadian values of inter-cultural understanding and respect for human/minority rights in regions of actual/potential conflict, especially where there is a clear interest in outside expertise in understanding and managing the challenges posed by politicized diversity.
- 2) To strengthen regional security in Central/Eastern Europe by examining some of the root causes of local political instability and proposing measures to improve conflict management capabilities.

Building on the success of "pilot" seminars held in Slovakia in May 1995 and Latvia in September 1996, and in response to invitations from government officials and NGO representatives in Ukraine, the seminar organizers put together a Canadian "team" with expertise in a number of subject areas of interest to the host institutions in Ukraine. They include multiculturalism and the rights of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, inter-cultural relations, centre-periphery relations, and migration/refugee policy.

The members of the Canadian team included:

Mr. Steven Lee, National Director, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

Ms. Judy Young, Special Advisor, Multiculturalism, Department of Canadian Heritage

Prof. Will Kymlicka, University of Ottawa

Prof. Jeremy Webber, Faculty of Law, McGill University