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THE HAGUE – THE NETHERLANDS

MINORITIES IN EUROPE

Croatia, Estonia and Slovakia

Edited by: Snežana Trifunovska

'...today's human rights violations are the causes of tomorrow's conflicts.'

Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

States having minorities on their territory have a duty to undertake all measures aimed at avoiding conflicts which might develop, but over and beyond that bottom line, they also have a duty to develop norms and guarantee systems which go hand in hand with the current international standards of safeguarding human rights, multiculturalism and pluralism.

In this book three aspects of minority situations are highlighted: (a) political/security, (b) internal legal and (c) economic aspects, in the cases of three countries: Croatia, Estonia and Slovakia. These countries achieved independence as a result of the post-Cold War dissolution of their predecessor States. In all three, there is a relatively complex minority situation which is, inter alia, a result of changing State borders. Thereafter, all three have in the recent past undergone a transformation of their political system – from one party communist to multiparty

democracy – and of their economic system – from centrally-planned State-ownership to a free-market economy – and, at this moment in time, are in the process of integrating into the Western European political, security and economic structures.

Of course, the choice of Croatia, Estonia and Slovakia does not undermine the fact that a similar analysis would be equally worthy and interesting as regards other European countries. It would, just as the present publication envisages, contribute to pinpointing those minority aspects where the real problems lie and to the means and mechanisms for adequate protection to be afforded to minority groups, rather than to the on-going general discussion about minorities.

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