



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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14 January 2004

UKR42282.E

Ukraine: Situation of little people (dwarfs) in Ukraine and treatment by the general public; whether they are targeted by skinheads or nationalist groups; availability of state protection and state programmes benefiting little people
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information concerning the specific treatment of little people in Ukraine could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, sources consulted commented on their situation in the context of the circumstances facing the disabled population.

In a written communication dated 6 January 2004, the Lviv Independent Living Centre (LILC), an informal organization that provides care to Ukrainians with disabilities, expressed the following views. The LILC is unaware of any specific formal or informal reports regarding the treatment of little people in Ukraine. Although it is possible that there are no problems facing little people, it is also a fact that Ukrainian public services are "poorly adapted to the needs of the handicapped"; and so challenges faced by little people may resemble the challenges facing the disabled population. The LILC does not have any information about threats towards little people from skinheads or nationalists, and states that, in general, Ukrainian nationalists are non-violent and have no apparent issue with little people. No specific information about state programmes targeting little people is known to exist, and the government did not include problems faced by little people in its annual report "On the Situation of the Handicapped in Ukraine" and "Guidelines for the State's Policy in Dealing with the Problems of the Individuals with Special Needs." All discrimination towards disabled individuals is contrary to the Ukrainian Constitution. While legal protection for the handicapped does not include provisions for any particular handicapped group, the protection of all handicapped people is regulated in the law On the Guidelines of Social Security of the Handicapped in Ukraine (dated 1991 but with subsequent amendments).

A telephone interview conducted with the President of the Americans for Human Rights in Ukraine (AHRU) organization on 12 January 2004 corroborated the LILC account. While AHRU did not have any information on the position of little people in Ukraine, it maintained that, in general, people with disabilities and the elderly are discriminated against (AHRU 12 Jan. 2004). Similar, *Country Reports 2002* said that societal discrimination against the disabled population is a problem (31 March 2003, Sec. 5). Buses and trains, for example, with high seats and steps difficult to access by a person of small stature are poorly or simply not equipped to handle anyone with special needs (AHRU 12 Jan. 2004). A professor of social work at the University of Manitoba, together with his colleague, both of

whom have experience dealing with people in Ukraine with disabilities, knew of only one little person in Lviv who happened to be employed in a family-run operation as a street newspaper vendor (5 Jan. 2004).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Americans for Human Rights in Ukraine (AHRU), Newark NJ. 12 January 2004. Telephone interview with President.

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002. 31 March 2003. United States Department of State. Washington, DC.
<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18398.htm>> [Accessed 14 Jan. 2004]

Lviv Independent Living Centre, Lviv, Ukraine. 6 January 2004. Email correspondence from Executive Director.

University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. 5 January 2004. Letter from Professor of Social Work.

Additional Sources Consulted

IRB Databases

Unsuccessful attempts to contact the following organizations

- Canadian Centre on Disability Studies
- Disabled Peoples International Ukraine
- Government of Ukraine - Ministry of Health
- Ukrainian Centre for Medical Statistics
- Ukrainian Red Cross
- World Health Organization Ukraine

Internet Sites, including:

Amnesty International

Ananova

BBC

European Country of Origin Information Network

Freedom House

Human Rights Internet

Human Rights Watch

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Ukrainian Red Cross

United States Department of State

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