

Motions and Declarations

Motion/Declaration number	1
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Name of the person introducing the Motion/Declaration to the GA	Jurijs Petropavlovskis
Member party	Latvian Russian Union
Title (of the Motion/Declaration)	Minority schools under attack in Latvia
<p>A. Whereas over 37% of Latvia’s inhabitants are using Russian as family language.</p> <p>B. Considering that Latvian government is continuously working for liquidation of education in Russian and other minority languages.</p> <p>The model adopted in 2004 presumed that all schools for ethnic minorities were bilingual. In primary school they could learn in their native language; in secondary school (5th-9th grade) part of the subjects was taught in Latvian and part in the native language. The required by law proportion in high school was a 60:40 split in favour of Latvian. Which subjects were taught in which language was up to the school as long as the proportion was correct.</p> <p>C. Whereas starting from September 1, 2019, the new amendments to the Education Law, setting up new rules for minority languages in Latvian schools, entered into force.</p> <p>School education will remain bilingual up to the 6th grade. For grades 7-9 (starting from the 2019/2020 academic year), 80% of all subjects will be taught in Latvian and all the exams will be held in Latvian only. For grades 10-12 (as from 2021/2022 academic year) all subjects will be taught exclusively in Latvian.</p> <p>Schools of ethnic minorities maintain the right to teach the children’s native language, literature and culture as non-mandatory courses.</p> <p>D. Whereas the Constitutional Court of Latvia by its judgements of April 23 and November 13, 2019, upholds the new restrictions on minority languages in private and public schools, openly taking a political decision instead of fair legal proceeding.</p> <p>E. Considering that international organisations and human rights bodies, such as UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, High Commissioner on National Minorities of OSCE, Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe and Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament already gave their negative opinion on the “educational reform” in Latvia.</p> <p>The Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament in its resolution mentions, that: “Children need to learn in their native language, especially</p>	

in primary schools, as highlighted by recommendations of UNESCO and OSCE Hague recommendations”.

F. Whereas in accordance with Article 2 TEU, the Union is founded on the values of, inter alia, respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

G. Whereas the Article 14(2) of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities ratified by Latvia in 2005, stipulates that in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language. There is no doubt that such areas exist in Latvia, there is sufficient demand for receiving instruction in minority languages, and it is possible to ensure this, as it has been done by the Republic of Latvia during the both periods of national independence.

H. Reminds that UN Special Rapporteurs on education, protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and minority issues Koumbou Boly Barry, David Kaye and Fernand de Varennes already addressed to the Latvian Government the similar recommendation on 26 January 2018 and 8 November 2018. In their official recommendation letter they mention, in particular, that: “The adoption of these amendments will have a negative impact on the protection and promotion of the rights of minorities in Latvia, and in particular with regard to the right to education without discrimination of minority students in relation to the use of their mother tongue.”

The European Free Alliance:

1. Emphasises that the Latvian policy concerning national minorities’ education issues is in clear contradiction with the best interests of children to learn in their native language, especially in primary schools, as highlighted by UNESCO position paper “Education in a multilingual world”, UNESCO SDG4 – Education 2030 Framework for Action, UNESCO policy paper “If you don’t understand, how can you learn?” and OSCE Hague recommendations.

2. Urges the Government of Latvia to reconsider the amendments adopted during 2018 in Latvia to the Education Law and Law on the Institutions of Higher Education and to set as a primary goal of these laws the best interest of the children from national minority’s families. Therefore, broad consultations with parents, children, teachers and all concerned minorities’ representatives is crucial before considering to implement such a changes into educational system.

Reasoning:

The problem of school education in Latvia is on top of discussion and public unrest already starting from 1998. During all this period, our party Latvian Russian Union was fighting for the rights of Russian-speaking children to get an education in their mother tongue. At this stage, when only the last “battle” is left - the European Court of Human Rights, - we really need a strong support from our EFA colleagues.