

Aleksejs DIMITROVS

Dear ladies and gentlemen, dear friends!

It is a great honour to address you during the Forum on Minority Issues. I shall speak in my individual capacity, not expressing opinion of the European Parliament, where I am currently working.

As regards chapter VI of the recommendations, I just would like to mention some comments.

We mention the liberty of parents or guardians to choose educational institutions for their children other than those established by the authorities of the State. Here, I would like to suggest adding that public financial support should be provided to such institutions without any discrimination. In other words, if the State decides to provide any financial support to private educational institutions, such support is to be provided regardless of the language of instruction or religious affiliation of the institution. Such approach is developed also by the UN Human Rights Committee in the case *Waldman v. Canada*.

We also mention the opportunities for persons belonging to minorities to learn their mother tongue or learn through the medium of the mother tongue. I would like to stress that such opportunities shall be chosen with the participation of minorities themselves, according to their demands. Also adequate resources, such as staff, textbooks, teaching materials, must be guaranteed. Finally, the opportunity to learn through the medium of the mother tongue should not be limited to school education; tertiary education in minority languages is highly welcomed.

Further we mention transition from the native language of the child to the dominant language. I think we must be clear – this is only one of the options. Some countries successfully guarantee education in minority languages at all levels – students learn the dominant language as their second language, without any transition to it as the language of instruction.

Finally – one general remark. In some countries, for example, in the Baltic countries, such as Estonia and Latvia, legal guarantees for public education in minority languages have been diminished in recent years due to some political considerations. In my opinion, where such guarantees exist, States must refrain from limiting them, whatever reasons they refer to.

Thank you very much for your attention!