

Dear Chair!

In Estonia, a critical situation has arisen with education in Russian. This applies to both primary and secondary schools. Since Estonia regained independence in 1991, higher education in the Russian language was completely destroyed, the secondary school was predominantly Estonianized, and teachers for the Russian school were not consciously prepared. Russian schools and kindergartens are under constant threat of Estonianization, and Russian children, respectively, are at risk of forced assimilation. This is a targeted policy that is aimed at marginalizing the Russian national minority by restricting access to education in their native language. As a result of such a policy, over the 30 years of independence, the number of Russians with higher education has been halved. It is simply impossible now to receive high education in Russian language.

What legislative extremism in the issue of education can lead to can be seen in the example of neighbouring Latvia, where the country has embarked on the forcible assimilation of Russian children by completely translating Russian schools into Latvian. The same initiatives and threats are being raised against Russian schools and kindergartens in Estonia. And these are not only threats. Now on the agenda is the question of closing the Russian school in the cities of Keila and Kallaste, the Russian school in the city of Tartu is proposed reorganization from high school to primary. All this is done allegedly "in the interests" of the children, but, as usual, no one asks the children or their parents. Decisions are pushed by force against the will of parents and children to preserve education in Russian.

All parliamentary parties in Estonia support the abolition of education in Russian and the transition of all Russian schools and kindergartens into the Estonian language of instruction. Even a new initiative was developed that provides for the systematic liquidation of Russian schools by 2035. Such a plan, in fact, is a project of forcible assimilation of Russian children over the coming years. Moreover, the desire of the Russian national minority (which is about 30% of the population) to save Russian schools is completely ignored. Such a policy is against international conventions and recommendations, as well as the good practice of European Union countries regarding national minorities. Such unilateral decisions undermine basic European values based on respect for national minorities.

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