

## Russian School of Estonia

Dear Chair!

In Estonia, a critical situation has arisen in relation to education in the Russian language. This concerns both primary, as well as secondary schools. From the time Estonia established its independence in 1991, higher education in Russian has been completely done away with, secondary schools have been largely Estonianized, while the employees for Russian schools have consciously not been prepared. Russian schools and kindergartens are under constant threat of Estonianization, accordingly, Russian children are under threat of forced assimilation. This is a targeted policy, which is carried out in order to marginalize the Russian national minority by limiting their access to mother tongue education. As a result of this policy after 30 years of independence, the number of Russians with higher education has decreased two-fold. It is simply not possible to obtain higher education in Russian.

To see what such legislative extremism on the issue of education can lead to, we can observe through the example of neighboring Latvia, where the country has pursued the forced assimilation of Russian children by completely translating Russian schools into Latvian. Such initiatives and threats also target Russian schools and kindergartens in Estonia. And they are not only threats. Currently, the closure of Russian schools in Keila and Kallaste is being considered, while the Russian school in Tartu has been suggested to reorganize into a general school. All of this is allegedly done “in the interests” of the children, but, as usual, no one asks the children or their parents. Decisions are pushed through by force against the will of parents and children to maintain education in Russian.

All parliamentary parties in Estonia are in favor of abolishing education in Russian and transferring all Russian schools and kindergartens to Estonian-language education. A new initiative was even developed that would systematically eliminate Russian schools by 2035. Such a plan, in essence, entails the forced assimilation of Russian children over the coming years. At the same time, the desire of the Russian national minority itself (around 30% of the population) to maintain Russian schools is completely ignored. Such a policy contradicts international conventions and recommendations, as well as the good practice of European Union countries in relation to national minorities. Such unilateral decisions undermine basic European values, based on respect for national minorities.

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