



Statement on Centralised Examinations in Latvia by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Latvia, Mr Uldis Mikuts in response to the delegation of the Russian Federation

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Thank you, Mr Chairman!

Listening to the statement just delivered by distinguished Russian representative, a thought came to my mind that it would have been much more useful to present comprehensive picture and not few separate elements taken out of the whole context and in such a way rather misrepresenting a reality.

Let me emphasize few points in response to the elements mentioned.

The amendments to the relevant regulations are discussed have been adopted in accordance with international standards, in conformity with the constitution of the Republic of Latvia and only after a comprehensive debate and analysis. These amendments will not in any way affect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, guaranteed to them by the Latvian constitution and relevant laws and regulations.

The goal of these amendments is to create a common standard for centralised examinations in Latvian language. Interests of children are taken as a first priority. The aim is twofold. Studies both in state universities and in professional education establishments are possible only in Latvian. Examination in a Latvian language for pupils will help to prepare for their further education phase. The aim is also to prepare pupils for a successful and competitive entry to labour market in Latvia. Everyone has to speak Latvian to be successful in a labour market and there need to be equal chances to every pupil after finishing school.

No crucial reforms in area of minority education are planned. These amendments, in principle, just follow the reality. Data of the National Centre of Education of Latvia show that every year more and more pupils, belonging to national minorities, are selecting Latvian language as language of examinations. More than 85% pupils in 2016 chose Latvian as a language of examination in comparison of only 60% in 2008. Such a dynamics is more than remarkable and shows that both parents and schools recognise importance of a state language for pupils to continue studies in universities or enter labour market.

Before adoption by the government these draft amendments were discussed and approved by the Consultative Council on minority education issues. This consultative and representative body consists, amongst others, by teachers and directors of a wide range of minority schools, including Russian language schools. Let me particularly stress that any minority education establishment can take part in work of this Council.

Last but not least, new amendments do not affect existing education model for national minorities. Latvia will continue not only protect but also widely support national minority languages, education and culture. The state support for education in national minority languages exceeds that of many European countries and is available in seven national minority languages: Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Belarussian, Ukrainian, Estonian and Lithuanian. The proportion of content of education programs remains the same – at least 60% of content is conducted in Latvian and 40% is conducted in minority languages.

Thank you, Mr Chair!