



Report by Maksim Nikolajev (NGO “Russian School of Estonia”) at [OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting \(HDIM\)](#), Warsaw, 2015.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!

During last 10 years in Estonia we are experiencing forcible Estonianization of Russian schools, which consists of imposing Estonian language of instructions in the last 3 grades of the school (from 10th till 12th grade), stating that there should be at minimum 60% of the educational programme taught in Estonian. Also, the authorities make attempts and statements about the need of Estonianization in the basic school (from 1st till 9th grade).

In the year 2011, 15 Russian gymnasiums (1-12 grades) in Tallinn and Narva based on the Estonian Law of Basic School and Gymnasium have made an appeal about Russian language of instructions in the schools. Those appeals were supported by local authorities. NGO “Russian School of Estonia” has collected 35 841 signatures supporting the continuity of Russian schools. However, in December 2011, the government of Estonia declined the appeals.

After that the appeals were made two more times. The last time these were made in 2014 by 5 Russian gymnasiums in Tallinn. On the 17th of September 2015 from the government of Estonia came another regular refusal. The main arguments by the government in all three cases was that the large funds were allocated for “studying Estonian language” and based on this the government thinks that the Russian children are ready for being taught in Estonian language. The opinion of parents and children is ignored. Also authorities ignore the fact that the Law **does not** connect anyhow the right to select the language of instructions in the school and “readiness” or “non-readiness” to be taught in Estonian language. Besides that, there is the German gymnasium in Estonia, where Estonian children, who are quite ready to be taught in Estonian language, are taught in German.

It is apparent that the government of Estonia made of the representatives of the national majority uses forcible Estonization of Russian schools for the assimilation of Russian national minority. Moreover, the process has speed up in 2015³.

In August 2015, the Chancellor of Justice of the Republic of Estonia Ülle Madise made a statement telling that all Russian schools have to be closed and the education should be given in Estonian language. The Chancellor of Justice in Estonia, besides controlling the correspondence of laws to the Constitution of Estonia, has the role of ombudsman. That institution in Estonia does not follow the Paris Principles⁴ and is a profanation. The official for that position is appointed by the parliament and supports pro-government line for forcible assimilation of the Russian national minority.

Following the Chancellor of Justice, the Minister of education and science Jürgen Ligi has proposed to take away the norm from the Law of basic school and gymnasium that allow making the appeals for Russian language of instructions in schools.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the Russian schools have already appeared in Estonian in the 18th century, as the mass education in principle was about to emerge in Europe. The Russian schools have existed in Estonia at the times of Russian empire, during the times of the first Estonian Republic and in the Soviet times. This is a well established institutions formed over the centuries, which is now being forcibly destroyed despite the fact that 30% of the population in Estonia has Russian language as our mother tongue.

Thank you for your attention!

³ http://kitezheu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/State_report_Estonia_Kitezhe_150810.pdf

⁴ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/StatusOfNationalInstitutions.aspx>