



INIMÕIGUSTE TEABEKESKUS
LEGAL INFORMATION CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ЦЕНТР ИНФОРМАЦИИ ПО ПРАВАМ ЧЕЛОВЕКА

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26 October 2016. Working session 11: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (continued), including prevention and responses to hate crimes in the OSCE area, and combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance on religious grounds

Statement by the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights (LCHR), Estonia

Tolerance and non-discrimination: situation and minority rights

Larissa Semjonova, Deputy Director of the LICHHR

Dear Chair, Dear High Commissioner, Dear participants,

In last year 2015, the sixth public opinion survey “Integration Monitoring 2015” was presented. According to the study, attitudes of ethnic Estonians toward the conditions of naturalization significantly changed. The great majority now believe that all children born in Estonia may obtain citizenship through simplified procedure, and all persons who was born in the territory of Estonia also. In addition, Estonians became more tolerant with regard to including non-Estonians in the political life.

Still, ethnic Estonians are not ready to see local Russians at a high political position. Only 7 percent of respondents agreed that the Estonian prime minister might be Russian or other minority member.

The general situation at the labour market improved comparing with the crisis period; however, one may observe the clear ethno-linguistic separation. Ethnic minority members assess their opportunities significantly lower than Estonians. Ethnic differences increased in the economic indicators too, particularly among individuals with higher education. The real ground for that is limited access to highly paid positions.

The study show that even perfect language skills cannot equalize minority members with Estonians. Established linguistic requirements for the labour categories are excessively high, and in many cases higher than it is necessary for the performance of official duties level.

Estonian authorities consider Estonia language training as the main measure for achieving equal opportunities. Therefore, since 2007 in Estonia started the reform of school education. Schools with basic and primary level were transformed to partly, while secondary schools to predominantly Estonian language of instruction by 2013/2014. In the beginning of this year the Ministry of Education and Science replied to our request that since that time all schools in Estonia are considered as schools with Estonian language of instruction, i.e. **there are no municipal and state schools in Estonia with Russian language of instruction anymore.**

AS we already stressed in our communications, the trends in sphere of education are plainly discriminative. Minor successes in improving the Estonia language knowledge among youth does not compensate for reduce the level of achievement in subjects the teaching, which is conducted in the Estonian language. Honest professionals believe that the system of teaching 60 percent of subjects in the Estonian language failed. Researches, analysis and results of the schools' visits demonstrate that average level of language proficiency did not improve. The system "60/40" in secondary schools simply does not work.

Such conclusions share academicians, politicians and teachers. For instance, Mailis Reps, former Minister of education; Eugeny Ossinovski, former Education Minister, now Trade and Health Minister; Juri Ratas, vice speaker of the Parliament; Edgar Latishevich, Head of the NGO "Pupil's voice"; and others.

Last year, in our statement we reported that the number of Tallinn and Narva Schools tried to protect its constitutional right to choose the language of instruction but lost in the domestic courts. The LICHR helped one parent to prepare the application to the UN Committee on Human Rights under Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, referring to Art. 26 (prevention of discrimination) and Art. 27 (culture, religious and linguistic rights).

The application turn attention to the violation of the Russian children the right to education on their native language, and hence, to discrimination (unequal approach) in comparison with children whose native language is Estonian. Actually, the Russian children deny the right to cultural development in mother tongue.

(Recommendations – see version in Russian)