



Brussels, 29 January 2018

Your Excellency,

As a follow up to our meeting on 19 December, let me thank you once again for our open and constructive conversation.

On behalf of our parliamentary group, I would like to reiterate our concerns regarding the envisaged reform of publicly funded education in minority languages in Latvia, as described in pending draft amendments to the Education Law (VSS-1280) and amendments to the General Education Law (VSS-1281).

In accordance with Article 2 TEU, the Union is founded on the values of, inter alia, respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. Article 14(2) of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities ratified by Latvia in 2005, stipulates that in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language. There is no doubt that such areas exist in Latvia, there is sufficient demand for receiving instruction in minority languages, and it is possible to ensure this, as it has been done by the Republic of Latvia both before the occupation and after the restoration of independence.

Moreover, in the European Parliament resolution of 11 March 2004 on the comprehensive monitoring report of the European Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia co-rapporteur Elisabeth Schroedter from our political group called on the Latvian authorities to ensure bilingual school education, including the final exams, according to the current rules, which envisage 60% of teaching in the state language and 40% in the minority language and considered that flexible application of the education law could contribute to social and economic integration of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvian society and promote



dialogue so as to soften tensions with this minority, which represents a significant part of the population. This recommendation was supported by the European Parliament and remains relevant today.

The envisaged reform is also questionable from the point of view of the rights of persons belonging to minorities enshrined in Article 114 of the Constitution of Latvia. Also the Constitutional Court of Latvia indicated in Case No.2004-18-0106 that the principle of equality in the Constitution not only allows, but also requires differential treatment of persons belonging to minorities in the field of education.

Finally, let me draw your attention to the Opinion on the provisions of the Ukrainian Law on Education of 5 September 2017, which concern the use of the State Language and Minority and other Languages in Education, adopted by the Venice Commission recently. It raised several concerns about similar reforms to be implemented by the Ukrainian authorities in the field of education in minority languages.

We are convinced that the assessment by the Venice Commission would help Latvia to ensure that the envisaged reform will not breach the Union values and respectfully ask you to forward the recommendation to request such assessment to your Government.

Sincerely yours,

Ska Keller

Philippe Lamberts

Co-Presidents  
Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament