

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working session 12 and 13, Tuesday 2 October 2012
Rights of persons belonging to national minorities

Recommendations of Citizens advice bureau "Conscentia"

Whereas

- Twenty years of monitoring and advocacy of minorities rights in Latvia shows that Latvian government never had a real will to provide and promote national minorities rights. Despite some compromises achieved during joining to EU and NATO, now it regularly comes to reversions.
- Despite of benefits of multilingualism, Latvia do not accept it. The language policy is based on a contest between Latvian as a state language and Russian as a minority language, where only one language should survive. As consequence the language policy is ineffective. There is not enough funding for promoting knowledge of state language and opportunities to use the minority language are limited.
- The problem become even worse because of limiting political rights of minorities. 14% of Latvian population are non-citizens, what is special kind of nationals without political rights. Thus ineffective and erroneous language policy is reinforced by limitation of political rights.
- The idea of bilingual school education for minorities is acceptable. But there is still no clearness, whether it is an endpoint of Latvian educational reform or only transitional stage to instruction only in Latvian. The term "bilingual education" is not stipulated by law. Authorities mention knowledge of Latvian language as only criteria for competitiveness, disregarding reasonings about knowledge of three languages - Latvian, Russian and English as precondition for competitiveness in the modern and dynamic job market.

We recommend OSCE

- to continue dialogue with Latvia about language policy in connection with rights of political participation of minorities;
- to shape dialogue with Latvia about educational policy with focus on multicultural and multilingual educational policy as whole and not only on particular adjustments for national minorities;
- to continue monitoring of minority rights situation in Latvia and Baltic countries;
- to organize conference about role of minority rights and interference with the concept of national state for representatives of parliament, governmental legal experts, media, judges of constitutional court, high officers of education and culture ministries;

We recommend Latvia

- to rethink the language policy in light of OSCE and CoE recommendation and to make language policy effective for both majority and minority speakers;
- to include the term "bilingual education" as fundamental characteristic of Latvian educational system in the Law on education;
- to elaborate special procedure for non-citizens naturalisation and distinct the non-citizens from new immigrants.

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