

Doc. 11252
17 April 2007

Discriminatory amendments to the Estonian Law on Language

Motion for a resolution
presented by Mr Melnikov and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

1. As of 1 March 2007, the amendments to the Law on Language adopted by the Estonian Parliament entered into force, thus toughening up the requirements regarding mastering the State language. These amendments modify the procedures to determine the knowledge of the State language and enlarge the powers of the Language Inspectorate, giving it, in particular, the right to recognise void certificates of State language skills.
2. In accordance with these amendments, the responsibilities of the Linguistic Inspectorate which previously acted on the basis of governmental decisions, are now proclaimed by law. Its officials have now the right not only to repeatedly test the level of mastering the State language in organisations and enterprises, but also to recognise void certificates of the Estonian language exam if the officials of the Language Inspectorate have doubts as to linguistic skills.
3. Raising the Inspectorate to the rank of an independent body on State supervision of the implementation of the Law on Language transforms this institute into a state instrument of political pressure on those who disagree with the discriminatory infringement of the national minorities' rights in Estonia.
4. In particular, Amnesty International noted that these amendments will only worsen the unequal situation of the national minorities on the Estonian labour market. This organisation believes that the State language skills evaluation system is repressive and punitive by nature and hampers the policy of social integration and cohesion.
5. In this regard we believe that the Assembly should give its competent evaluation of the linguistic policy of Estonia who committed upon accession to the Organisation to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons under its jurisdiction as well as minority rights in accordance with the Council of Europe standards and principles.

Signed (see overleaf)

*Signed*¹:

MELNIKOV, Ivan, Russian Federation, UEL
ÇAVUŞOĞLU Mevlüt, Turkey, EDG
CHELEMENDIK Sergej, Slovakia, EDG
FOMENKO Alexander, Russian Federation, UEL
GRACHEV Vladimir, Russian Federation, EDG
GREBENNIKOV Valery, Russian Federation, EDG
JACOBSEN Bjørn, Norway, UEL
KOLESNIKOV Victor, Russian Federation, EDG
KOX Tiny, Netherlands, UEL
KYPRIANOU, Andros, Cyprus, UEL
OSKINA, Vera, Russian Federation, EDG

¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group