



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy

Right to Education in Transnistria

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

European Parliament, Plenary Session

Strasbourg, 6 February 2014

Mr. President, Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

The Republic of Moldova is facing a very difficult political situation this year, where deep-rooted domestic factors of instability are compounded by systematic undermining of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity from outside. Attempts to escalate tensions in Transnistria belong to the latter category. We deeply deplore them and will continue to help Moldova withstand pressures.

In a ruling published in October 2012, the European Court of Human Rights found that harassment of the Romanian-language schools in Transnistria was in violation of the right to education of children living in the Transnistrian region and whose Romanian is the mother tongue. The European Union stands firm in the fight for fundamental rights: we strongly condemn any action by the Transnistrian de facto authorities that infringe on the right to education in the territory they control.

But the European Union also supports, and will continue to support by all means, Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity. An escalation of tensions between Chisinau and Tiraspol poses a formidable threat. We will therefore put all our weight behind efforts to resolve the schools issue by way of negotiation. The OSCE, which coordinates the '5+2' talks, issued in November 2012 a comprehensive set of recommendations to address this issue, which are highly regarded by the international community.

We feel strongly that the way forward lies in nudging the two sides into renewing dialogue on education issues, along the lines of the OSCE recommendations, with a view to upholding the right to education of all children. Of course, the use of ultimatums at the negotiating table is not acceptable, and it will be first necessary to lift current pressure on the Romanian-language schools. We will address the schools issue along these lines during the next round of 5+2 negotiations, scheduled for the end of this month.

Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

While paying so much attention to the schools issue, it is crucially important not to gloss over the many other factors of tension in Transnistria. With a new allocation of €28 million of technical and financial assistance agreed last year, we will continue implementing our programme of confidence-building projects, which allow the establishment of lasting cooperation at the civil society and local levels across the Nistru River.

Moreover, we will continue working for the Transnistrian de facto authorities to consider in earnest the substantial benefits the region can gain, if it participates in the future Association Agreement with Moldova. This offer is about social progress, improvement in human rights and economic modernisation. Our aim is opening up many new opportunities for the people living in Transnistria, who also are among our closest neighbours.

Thank you for your attention.