

P7_TA-PROV(2014)0108

Right to education in the Transnistrian region

European Parliament resolution of 6 February 2014 on Transnistria (2014/2552(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Moldova and the European Union, which entered into force on 1 July 1998,
 - having regard to the Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova adopted by the seventh EU-Moldova Cooperation Council meeting on 22 February 2005,
 - having regard to the Association Agreement initialled by the EU and Moldova on 29 November 2013 on the occasion of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius,
 - having regard to the ruling of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights of 19 October 2012 on the case of Catan and 27 Others v. Moldova and Russia (No 43370/04),
 - having regard to the declarations of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) at its 1999 summit in Istanbul and its 2002 Ministerial Council meeting in Oporto,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in the Republic of Moldova, particularly that of 15 September 2011 on the Association Agreement¹, and to its resolutions on the situation in the Transnistrian region,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 September 2013 on the pressure exerted by Russia on Eastern Partnership countries (in the context of the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius)² and its resolution of 12 December 2013 on the outcome of the Vilnius Summit and the future of the Eastern Partnership, in particular as regards Ukraine³,
 - having regard to the judgment of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova of 5 December 2013 that the country's official language is Romanian and to the fact that Romanian-language education remains restricted by the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria,
 - having regard to the recommendations of the meetings of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, particularly those pertaining to the right to education in the Transnistrian region,
 - having regard to Rules 122(5) and 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the 1992 war in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova led to the establishment of a separatist, illegitimate and authoritarian regime in the region; whereas

¹ OJ C 51 E, 22.2.2013, p. 108.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0383.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0595.

the situation of frozen conflict persists, and human rights violations continue to be gross and widespread, including in the area of education and the operation of schools;

- B. whereas any political interference with the educational process is unacceptable: whereas the parties involved in the settlement of the Transnistrian issue should ensure free and non-discriminatory access to education in the region and the regular functioning of educational institutions and should accord the highest priority to the security of children and staff;
- C. whereas the local authorities in Gagauzia organised a regional referendum on 2 February 2014 concerning the direction of the foreign policy of the country; whereas this referendum was declared illegal by the central government and the competent judicial authorities;
- D. whereas negotiations concerning Transnistria have been ongoing since 1992, in the so-called '5+2' format, but no sustainable solution based on full respect for the Republic of Moldova's territorial integrity and sovereignty has been found, despite the abovementioned repeated international decisions; whereas Russian troops continue to be stationed there;
- E. whereas the 5+2 negotiations resumed again in 2011 and the Working Group on Education has met since then;
- F. whereas the tensions have been growing, as the negotiations are constantly undermined by the self-proclaimed Transnistrian authorities; whereas the new round of 5+2 negotiations has been provisionally agreed to take place on 27-28 February 2014 and constitutes a fresh opportunity to end the deadlock and achieve substantial progress;
- G. whereas according to a November 2012 OSCE report, there are eight Latin-script schools that are able to continue teaching with the help of the Ministry of Education, six of them on Transnistrian-controlled territory and two relocated to neighbouring Moldovan-controlled territory on the left bank, resulting in serious daily transport problems for the pupils; whereas the report highlighted that the situation of these schools remains urgent, issues of concern including rental contracts and conditions of premises, freedom of movement, transport of goods, health, safety and sanitary inspections, declining pupil numbers, pressure or intimidation towards parents and teachers, legal status, and the specific situations of the property in Rîbnița and the schools formerly located in Grigoriopol and Dubăsari;
- H. whereas in December 2013 the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria relaunched an aggressive campaign against the eight Romanian-language schools, with actions ranging from administrative pressures to declarations by the self-proclaimed authorities indicating that they will shut down those schools that refuse to recognise the authority of the separatist regime;
- I. whereas many of the teachers at the Lucian Blaga high school in Tiraspol have been subjected to illegal interrogation by the separatist militia and pressure to pay their taxes to the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria and not to the Moldovan state; whereas the school's bank accounts were illegally blocked for several weeks in January 2014 by the self-proclaimed authorities; whereas on 5 February 2014 the principal, the accountant and the driver of the "Lucian Blaga" high school were detained when they were transporting the salaries of the high school's staff;

- J. whereas the meeting of the Working Group on Education held in Chişinău on 27 January 2014 did not manage to successfully address the outstanding issues around the Romanian-language schools; whereas a provisional agreement was reached to conduct joint inspection visits to those schools;
- K. whereas the OSCE Mission in Moldova has been monitoring the functioning of the Romanian-language schools since the 2004 crisis when the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria took action against eight schools in the region that are operated by the Moldovan central authorities and follow a Moldovan curriculum; whereas the OSCE mediates between the central and the Transnistrian education authorities to find solutions for outstanding issues and prevent the emergence of new crises; whereas the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria have been limiting the OSCE's mission access to the region and have forbidden access to the head of mission as of 1 February 2014;
- L. whereas the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights of 19 October 2012 in the case of *Catan and Others v. Moldova and Russia* pointed to a violation by the Russian Federation of Article 2 of Protocol No 1 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;
- M. whereas the Republic of Moldova has made great progress towards deepening its relations with the EU, and the Association Agreement is an opportunity for the entire country, including regions such as Transnistria or Gagauzia, to further deepen its relations with the EU and adopt European values and standards while improving its economic prospects;
- N. whereas education is an area where there is a great potential for future cooperation in spite of the sensitivities involved;
1. Strongly deplores the lack of respect for human rights in the Transnistrian region, especially in the field of education;
 2. Condemns the politicisation of the education policy area, considers freedom of education to be a fundamental right, and calls for full respect for that right and the cessation of any form of pressure directed towards Romanian teaching institutions in the Transnistrian region;
 3. Regrets that the persistence of the above problems has significantly contributed to falling enrolment in the Romanian-language schools; strongly criticises the fact that those schools are charged higher rates for public utilities in Transnistria than other educational institutions and that the ambiguous situation of the premises and rental contracts leaves both the schools and their pupils in uncertainty;
 4. Condemns the increased administrative pressure being exercised by the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria, in particular higher rents prices, the abolition of free rental contracts (affecting the *Gymnasiums* in Corjova and Roghi), restrictions on bank account use and harassment of teachers (Lucian Blaga high school, January 2014) culminating with the detention of the principal, the accountant and the driver of the high school on 5 February 2014;
 5. Urges the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria to fully respect the fundamental right to mother-tongue education and to accord the highest priority to the security of children and staff;

6. Calls on the authorities to ensure that children and parents are protected from the adverse consequences of the current political situation and to find solutions in the best interest of the children and parents directly concerned;
7. Takes note of the agreement to conduct joint inspection visits to the Romanian-language schools over the period 10-20 March 2013;
8. Condemns the lack of constructive participation by the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria in the 5+2 format negotiations, resulting in minimal progress since the resumption of talks;
9. Emphasises the EU's firm commitment to the territorial integrity of Moldova and calls for a greater involvement of the EU in solving this conflict in its immediate neighbourhood, including the enhancement of the EU's status to that of a negotiating partner; expresses its support for dialogue as the only tool for resolving such sensitive and important matters and ensuring long-term solutions;
10. Believes that the prosperity and stability of the Republic of Moldova, within its internationally recognised borders, and of the entire region can be fully achieved only through a peaceful solution to the Transnistrian conflict;
11. Calls on the OSCE to continue its monitoring and negotiation facilitation activities and to defend the right to education of the students of the Romanian-language schools in Transnistria; further calls on the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria to cooperate with the OSCE mission to Moldova and allow it to access its territory;
12. Calls on the High Representative to address the issue of the right to education during the next round of 5+2 negotiations scheduled for February 2014, to devote more attention to the 5+2 format negotiations, and to engage at all levels, including in its bilateral summits, with all the parties involved in order to achieve a faster comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Transnistrian conflict;
13. Calls on the Russian Federation to implement fully the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights that ruled that Russia had violated the right to education in the cases of Moldovan schools using Romanian in the region of Transnistria;
14. Notes that the presence of Russian troops leads to a climate that endangers respect for and promotion of human rights in the region; calls on the Russian Federation to immediately stop its support for the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria and fulfil the commitments made in 1996 in the Council of Europe and reflected in OSCE decisions (Istanbul, 1999 and Oporto, 2002) concerning the withdrawal of Russian troops and arms from the territory of Moldova; ; calls, further, for the replacement of these troops with a civilian peacekeeping mission;
15. Calls for restraint on the part of local authorities, including those in Gagauzia, as well as for full respect for the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, the protection of minorities included; encourages dialogue with the Moldovan central authorities in order to avoid unilateral decisions;
16. Calls on the Council and the Member States to adopt a speedy procedure leading to the adoption of the visa liberalisation with Moldova in the course of this summer, since this will

have a positive impact on all citizens, including in the education field;

17. Calls on the Commission to speed up the technical procedures leading to the signing and provisional application of the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free trade Area Agreement;
18. Believes that social progress, improvements in human rights and economic modernisation in Transnistria would also be advanced by the implementation of the provisions of the Association Agreements, including the DCFTA, by the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria;
19. Calls on the Commission also to use instruments such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights to support the Transnistrian population directly, developing programmes to support civil society, access to information, education and free media, which have been denied by the self-proclaimed authorities in Transnistria;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative for Foreign Policy and Security, the Government and Parliament of Moldova, the Government of Romania, the Government of Ukraine, the Government of the Russian Federation, the Government of the USA, the Secretary-General of the OSCE and the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe.