

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1574/08

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to the Commission

Subject: European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in Romania?

In Nagypatak in Romania, the Moldovan Csángó (a Hungarian-speaking minority found in Moldova and Romania) Association has since November 2007 been organising extramural education in Hungarian for the Hungarian Csángó minority there. Two teachers from Hungary are holding the classes, which begin after the State school-day ends, in a building rented by the Association. These language classes are optional, and pupils attend them voluntarily, while the teachers are providing their services as volunteers. The curriculum developed gradually until the recent past, and participation grew. According to communications from the Association, however, a registered organisation in Nagypatak is seeking to put an end to the Hungarian-language classes. This organisation's activities used to have a low profile, but it is now blackmailing and intimidating pupils attending the classes and their parents. The State school in Nagypatak and its teachers are not impartial on the issue either: the institution has allowed its premises to be used for a meeting at which attempts were made to dissuade children from attending the Hungarian lessons.

The successive threats have been so effective that the session on 26 February 2008 was attended by only one pupil. Unknown persons have pelted with stones the building where the classes have been held, which is also where the teachers live. This is just one among many attempts to intimidate those who wish to master, study and develop their own language in addition to Romanian. Efforts have been made, and are continuing, to deter children from attending language lessons in their mother tongue who have sacrificed their own free time in the afternoons in order to do something which is not possible in the State education system: learn Hungarian. Pupils have reported that various teachers at the Romanian school have threatened to punish those who attend the Hungarian classes in the afternoon by giving them bad grades.

The above case seriously violates Article 22 of the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, which lays down that the Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. In view of the above, what action will the Commission take with regard to this and similar cases and to prevent similar occurrences in Romania, which acceded to the European Union on 1 January 2007?