

WRITTEN QUESTION P-5663/08  
by Edit Bauer (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Worsening situation of a traditional ethnic minority in Slovakia

1. Two years after the elections in Slovakia, the presence of the Slovak National Party in the Government and the promise of the Prime Minister, Robert Fico, that the status quo of minority rights would not be affected, xenophobia and intolerance rises day by day, and hate speeches by the chairman of one of the ruling parties towards the Hungarian minority are delivered on a daily basis. Moreover, neither the Prime Minister nor any other member of the ruling coalition distances himself unambiguously from these attacks, except the personal ones against the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary. The overall xenophobic statements of party leaders are clearly reflected in the results of research among Slovakian youth, where 63 % of those questioned stated that Hungarians should use their mother tongue exclusively at home. Moreover, the Minister of Education during his speech in the Slovak Parliament also promoted this view.
  2. In the recently issued geography textbooks for 9-10-year-old pupils translated into Hungarian under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, all the geographical names are indicated only in Slovak, which is contrary to the normal practice and use for the last 88 years, including the Communist era, and humiliates Hungarians, suggesting a low profile of the Hungarian language.
  3. Discriminatory practice against the Hungarian minority is used by the Ministry of Education also in connection with the projects financed by EU funds on the basis of ethnicity and geographical regions. Among the 161 winner projects only 19 were from south Slovakia and there was only one project won by a school using Hungarian as the teaching language. Even though the southern region represents one third of the country, less than 12% of the successful projects are from this region.
- What does the Commission intend to do to restore respect for basic human rights in Slovakia according to Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)?
  - According to the Commission is the new practice of using only the state language for all geographical names, thus restricting and limiting the language of instruction, in conformity with the principle of and legislation on combating discrimination based on ethnic origin under Article 13 of the Treaty?
  - Would the Commission investigate any presumptive misuse of EU funds in a Member State and in particular with regard to discrimination against those regions inhabited by citizens belonging to the ethnic minority, and also to discrimination against schools using a minority teaching language?