

V. Landsbergis's statements relating to the petition titled "Language rights of Poles in Lithuania" submitted by Mr Tomasz Snarski to the European Parliament.

Statement	Factual state of affairs
<p>„Citizens should not be constrained in their rights of teach geographical names in the state's official language, as depicted in the petition.”</p>	<p>Teaching subjects such as geography in a minority language is not a restraint in any way, but rather is to be treated as broadening of the scope of knowledge passed on (geographical names being taught in minority languages as well as in the state language). Landsbergis's statement suggests that the Education Act introduces a system in which only certain terms (related to geography) are taught in the state's official language as that is the way discussed and agreed upon when making amendments to the aforementioned legislation, but after it came into force, an obligation to teach all three additional subjects in Lithuanian, has come into force.</p>
<p>„Later on in the petition it can be read that since the teaching of history and geography has to be in Lithuanian, the creation of this situation poses a threat to the polish schools. Why? There is no correlation between the two mentioned facts.”</p>	<p>The actual threat posed is the provision included in the Education Act, which addresses the optimisation of the schooling system by, inter alia, closing down national minority schools in smaller settlements and leaving those Lithuanian ones. In consequence, even if a minority school in a settlement enjoys more popularity than a regular, Lithuanian school, the former would be closed down forcing parents to send their children to schools in which the only instruction language is Lithuanian.</p>

<p>“Increasingly more often the numbers of pupils are falling and as a result, Lithuanian schools get closed down in Lithuania as well as in Poland where the reason for closures is apparently the same as stated.”</p>	<p>In Poland, national minorities have a wide range of options in terms of education in their own, native language. The Lithuanian minority as the only one to enjoy such privilege has the possibility of attending schools in which tuition is in the minority language exclusively. In 2003 authorities of Puńsk and Sejny regions (80% of the representatives were Lithuanian nationals) decided, for economic reasons, to close down 5 Lithuanian schools. This decision has been critics by the Education Officer<sup>1</sup>. The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Poland decided to assign 800,000zł to maintain and support the schools<sup>2</sup>. In February 2011 Puńsk’s local authorities decided to close the only remaining Polish school in that region due to financial reasons<sup>3</sup>. They did not however consent to closing down the three Lithuanian schools of which the closure was also planned<sup>4</sup>.</p>
<p>„In two years’ time subjects such as geography and history will be delivered in the state language.”</p>	<p>P. Landsbergis is confusing the provisions of the legislation about which he is talking. The tuition of the aforementioned subject in Lithuanian has begun in 2011 and the mentioned two year transition period is related to a different aspect of that Act – the unified maturity exams (A-level equivalents). The Education Act relates to the unified exams but fails to mention a specific date of its introduction.</p>
<p>"We did not receive any complaints on this matter from the Russians, Belarusians or Jews."</p>	<p>This statement is untrue. Several Russian and one Belarusian school have declared their active opposition towards the amended Act, submitted numerous petitions to the authorities and actively participated in demonstrations and rallies. They showed their opposition with for example the letter send to the president of Lithuania by the members of the Association of Russian Lithuanians from W. Titowaz, dated 31st of March 2011, regarding the Education Act and the statement given by the leader of the Association of Teachers in Russian Schools in Lithuania, E. Kanaite, dated 21st of March 2011 („It’s not a sign of concern about national minorities (...) rather, it is a step closer to assimilation (...) [and] a breach of all principles of democracy.“)</p>

Schools with Lithuanian tuition in Poland				
Type of school	Infant schools	Primary schools	Middle schools	Others
<b>Schools</b>	8	8	2	
<b>Pupils</b>	119	256	99	30

<sup>1</sup> Schools with Lithuanian tuition will not be closed down, as read in: Gazeta Wyborcza dated 03.12.2003, <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34308,1368438.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Lithuanian schools in Puńsk survived, having received financial support, as read in: Gazeta Wyborcza dated 18.06.2003, <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34308,1536407.html>

<sup>3</sup> Lithuanians closing Lithuanian schools in... Poland, as read at: <http://jacwing.salon24.pl/281745,litwini-zamykaja-polskie-szkoly-w-polsce>.

<sup>4</sup> Polish school up for closing, the Lithuanian will remain, as read at: <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/617467.html>

Statements given by Mrs Milda Špėlytė-Letulienė (*Ministry of Education of Lithuania*):

Statement	Factual state of affairs
<p>„The Polish minority in Lithuania has the right to learn their native language all the way to the university level education. This situation is of a unique nature in Europe.”</p>	<p>This statement is untrue given the fact that such possibility is also enjoyed by other national minorities around Europe, for example at the University of Abo Akademi in Turku (Finland) with Swedish being the language of tuition, the Open University of Bozen-Bolzano (Italy) with English and German being languages of tuition alongside Italian and the University of Janos Sely in Komárno (Slovakia) with Hungarian as a tuition language.</p>
<p>„The University of Białystok Faculty in Vilnius is the only faculty of its type that functions outside the Polish territory.”</p>	<p>This statement is untrue as there are other long distance education centres apart from that run by the University of Białystok, for example those governed by the: Upper Silesian Business School of Katowice (Vienna), West Pomeranian Business School of Szczecin (Berlin), Science Academy of Łódź (London, Dublin, Paris), Academy of Humanities in Pułusk (London), Higher School of Local Development of Żyrardów (Dublin), Higher School of Information Technology and Management of Rzeszów (Lviv), Higher Management School of Legnica (Bern), European Higher School of Law and Administration in Warsaw (London) and Higher School of Management “Education” in Wrocław (Pardubice).</p>
<p>„10 million Poles who live outside of Poland have 170 Polish schools at their disposition, of which 55 are placed in Lithuania.”</p>	<p>The number of Polish schools in Lithuania is adequate and proportional to the size of the Polish-speaking population. The Polish minority in Lithuanian is the biggest Polish minority within the European Union.</p>
<p>„According to the European Tribunal, the law obliging persons to spell their names in accordance with the rules of the state’s official language do not infringe the principle of free movement of persons.”</p>	<p>In case number C-391/09, the Tribunal did not rule out the possibility of restricting the free movement of persons by the aforementioned regulations: “such a measure can restrict the freedoms provided by the treaty, solely if it causes significant inconveniences for the concerned persons in terms of administration, work and private life”.</p>

<p>"I would like to highlight that the increased scope of teaching in Lithuanian does not compromise the lessons delivered in the native language, of which the number has remained unchanged."</p>	<p>This is not true as after the reform has been introduced, history, geography and social studies will also all be delivered in the Lithuanian language. This means that the number of hours dedicated to minority language lessons is decreased considerably</p> <p>Additionally, Lithuanian lessons and the learning process according to the new programme for higher years will require a lot more effort on their part in terms of getting to know Lithuanian literature, which Lithuanian students have already covered in lower years. Over the period of two years, students should work through 156 pieces of literature. In years 5 to 10 they only discussed 31 what makes up merely 17% of the pieces of which knowledge is required when attempting the Lithuanian A-level equivalents.</p> <p>In many educational outposts the number of lessons on the Lithuanian language has been raised at the expense of other subjects. In years 11-12 in order to achieve a level A, 345 hours must be spent on Lithuanian and to obtain a B, the figure stands at 267. Meanwhile, in minority schools, the aforementioned figures stand higher, at 448 and 379 hours respectively. This makes the number of hours spent on learning Lithuanian in such schools higher by 100 hours.</p>
<p>„Lithuania was appropriately prepared for the Act to come into force. All teachers that work in minority schools are proficient at speaking Lithuanian and hold certificates confirming their skills. “</p>	<p>Not true. A teacher was required to hold level 2 standard of Lithuanian, which de facto does not allow the teacher in question to provide tuition in Lithuanian. It was only after the legislation came into force that all teachers (even those who teach Polish) had to obtain level 3 at Lithuanian language. Teachers do know the language, especially the younger ones, but delivering tuition on that language is a completely different matter. This is about, inter alia, proper pronunciation (Poles do not in their majority hear long and short vowels) and the syntax of speech. For example, a Lithuanian teacher teaches Lithuanian and a history teacher can literally threaten that.</p>
<p>“Funds have been assigned to purchase textbooks, dictionaries and other educative materials. Straight after the legislation came into force, all textbooks for history and geography got special annexes attached to them in Lithuanian, specifically for those chapters of which tuition is to take place in Lithuanian.”</p>	<p>According to teachers from Polish-speaking schools, the funds were insufficient and the aforementioned annexes were prepared in an unconsidered and indolent manner. For example some of the printed annexes were matched with the wrong textbooks or their content was incomplete.</p>

„Aiming to provide a high standard of education to national minorities, the Minister of Education on the 27th of December 2011 appointed a long term work group, which would represent all national minority schools. The group’s responsibility is to discuss matters related to implementation of the Education Act and to work on further development of the policy regarding education of the national minorities.”

According to teachers, there are no real visible effects of the group’s work. The group’s nature is better described as a discussion club rather than a team methodically resolving controversial matters.