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Brussels protest on Latvian school reforms

EFA MEP Miroslavs Mitrofanovs opposes Latvian education reforms

Opponents to controversial school reforms in Latvia brought their protests to Brussels this week, supported by Greens/EFA MEP **Miroslavs Mitrofanovs**, and former MEP **Tatjana Ždanoka**.

They oppose plans by the Latvian government to phase out most Russian language teaching in the country's schools, to be replaced by Latvian as the main language of instruction.

More than a quarter of Latvia's population speaks Russian as a first language.

The opponents claim the move would damage children's education. They complain that it could be seen as discriminatory or even an attempt at forcing assimilation.

MEP **Miroslavs Mitrofanovs** explained:

"The Latvian government claims this is about integration, when in fact it's about assimilation. As Russian speakers we simply want to keep our right to education in our first language.

"I'm a Russian speaker, but I'm also fluent in Latvian and happy to speak it whenever necessary. But the Latvian authorities do not want to extend the same courtesy to Russian speakers.

"No-one objects to learning Latvian, but we strongly object to the disappearance of Russian language education in a country where Russian speakers are a significant minority.

"These reforms are ideologically driven, and do not take account of the best interests of Russian speaking students in Latvia.

"They are unnecessary, divisive and damaging. We call upon the Latvian government to reach a fair compromise, and to put education before ideology."

The Latvian government aims at phasing in the reforms by 2021, but protests are ongoing.

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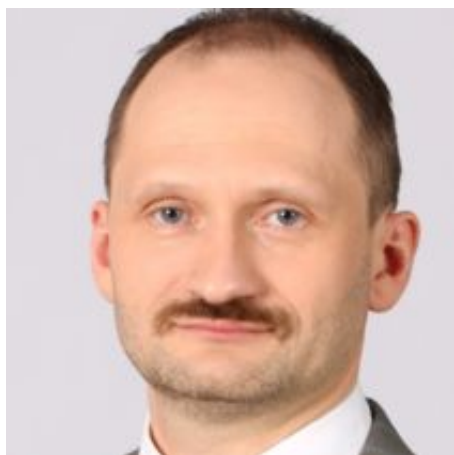Publication

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Miroslavs Mitrofanovs

Member

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