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Reding urged to stand firm on language rights

Press release by Jill Evans MEP (Plaid Cymru) and Tatjana Zdanoka MEP (PCTVL)

New European Commissioner for Justice and Fundamental Rights Viviane Reding has been urged by MEPs to resist pressure from certain member states and continue providing information in non-official EU languages.

The row erupted after it was revealed that Russian language factsheets concerning the results of an official EU survey into Gender Equality were withdrawn in Latvia and Estonia.

Plaid Cymru MEP and President of the European Free Alliance Group of MEPs Jill Evans has written to Ms Reding to highlight the problem. The issue was raised by Latvian MEP Tatjana Zdanoka who complained that the EU had withdrawn Russian language factsheets related to a Eurobarometer survey.

Jill Evans MEP commented:

"It's disappointing to hear that the EU is bowing to pressure to exclude Russian speakers in the Baltic in this way. It is all the more surprising when you consider that they constitute 40% of the population in Latvia, and nearly 30% in Estonia.

"I have written to Commissioner Reding to raise this issue. We hear often enough about how the EU wants to be closer and more accessible to its citizens. It will not achieve that aim by deliberately excluding entire language communities."

Latvian MEP **Tatjana Zdanoka** whose party draws considerable support from the country's Russian speakers, said:

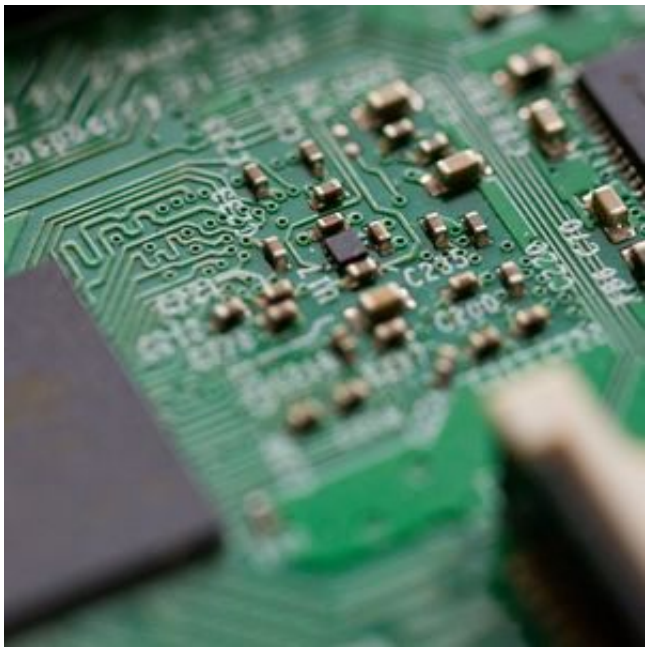
"Russian speakers make up 40% of the population of Latvia. There can be no justification for the European Commission's decision to withdraw Russian language material in this matter. This is particularly true since it concerns an official survey on a very important issue that's of relevance to everyone regardless of language.

"I understand that Commissioner Reding's officials even went as far as to apologise to the Latvian Permanent Representation to the EU! Perhaps an apology to Latvia's Russian speaking community would be more appropriate."

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Jill Evans

Member

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