The Moscow Times
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Latvian Official Proposes Ending Russian Language Education

By The Moscow Times

January 10, 2014

The children's ombudsman of Latvia has said that his country should end its system of bilingual education and stop teaching classes in Russian.

The official, Juris Jansons, told Latvian Radio Monday morning that Latvia should "form a more homogenous society" and that schoolchildren need to master the state language, Latvian, in order to fully participate in public life.

He cited the results of a study of the current bilingual system, which found that many Russian-speaking instructors do not know Latvian on a level sufficient for teaching.

Jansons added that some parents who also lack Latvian language skills are unable to help their children do their homework.

He dismissed claims that non-Latvian population is entitled to public schooling in its native

tongue by arguing that such arguments "contribute to ethnic confrontation."

About one third of Latvia's 2 million people consider Russian their native language.

Many schools in places like Riga teach in Russian, though the language does not have official status in the country.

In 2011 nationalist politicians moved to put an end to teaching in Russian, but their initiative failed to collect enough signatures.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/01/10/latvian-official-proposes-ending-russian-language-education-a30917