**President of the European Parliament**

Mr. Antonio Tajani

European Parliament

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**Russian Community of Latvia**

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Dear Mr.Tajani,

Appealing to the fundamental values of European Union such as human dignity, freedom, democracy and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, I address you on behalf of Russian speaking minority in Latvia. We are concerned about plans of Latvian government to prohibit bilingual school education for national minorities in public and private schools, the plan targets especially bilingual education with Russian language as most used minority language in Latvia.

Today more than one third of Latvian population speaks Russian as its mother tongue. There is a long history in Latvia of, and teaching through the medium of, minority language. The first Russian school in Latvia was opened in 1789, at that time Latvia was part of Russian Empire. During first independence period of Latvia, since 1919 Russian schools enjoyed an autonomy rights granted to all minorities schools. During Nazis’ occupation in Latvia 217 Russian schools continued to work. In soviet times instruction in Russian language was also granted. Only in times of European Union there are real possibility to abolish this centuries long intellectual and culture tradition of instruction in Russian language, ignoring the interests of persons belonging to minorities.

According to the draft amendments of the Education law and General education law, prepared by the government and submitted to the parliament, bilingual instruction in minority schools should be abolished step by step starting from 2019. Actually, minority language should be allowed only for minority language and minority literature subjects. It notably reduces the scope of education in minority languages granted in this part of the European union.

We believe, that after Latvia has joined the European Union, the Russian speaking Latvian population traditionally living on this territory should be deemed as Europeans and treated equally without any discrimination based on belonging to minorities. We believe that after joining the European Union European institutions share responsibility for protection and free development of Russian language and culture within its territory.

Trying to understand what means European times for Russian speaking minority in Latvian, we kindly ask you to share with us your position, to what extent fundamental European values are applicable to Russian speaking minority in Latvia, and to what extent the diminution of existing level of protection against clearly shown will of minority is compatible with European values. We urge you to draw your attention to and to involve in development of minority rights situation in Latvia.

Vladimirs Sokolovs

President of Russian Community of Latvia \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_