

University of Tartu

European Master Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation



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Minority Education in Estonia -

Practical Implementation of Human Rights Standards:

An Effective Policy to Integrate the Russian Minority?

Master Thesis

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2010/2011

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Lauri Mälksoo and to Katre Luhamaa who have assisted me in numerous ways.

My gratitude goes as well to Markku Suksi and Kristian Myntti from Åbo Akademi. I enjoyed both field trips and learned a lot about minorities. The library of the Human Rights Institute was of much help to find literature for my thesis.

I would like to thank the pupils and directors of both Russian language Gymnasiums for giving me interviews. I gained interesting insights through their answers. These interviews would not have been possible without the assistance of Svetlana and Nikolai.

Thank you as well to those young people in Tartu with whom I had fruitful discussions on the topic which helped me to write this thesis.

I am grateful to all my friends for their infinite patience and flexibility, most importantly to Mathilde, Helena, Stefania, Berit, Philine and Susan.

Abstract

This thesis assesses Estonian educational law and policy with regard to their compliance with international legal standards concerning the right to education of minorities and their positive and negative impact on the integration of the Russian minority in Estonia.

The research questions are: Is the Estonian policy compatible with international human rights law and standards? Is it an effective policy in terms of integration of the Russian minority?

This thesis focuses on a legal approach to the topic, incorporating the relevant international and national legislation regarding the right to education. As the implementation of legislation is linked to policy strategies and to their impact on peoples' lives, I will also analyse socio-political aspects. The literature thus includes these different fields: history, international law and sociology/political science often based on surveys. Opinions of international monitoring bodies and Estonian State Reports to these bodies, articles of Estonian newspapers and information requested from the Ministry of Education or taken from its website have been used.

The research results are summarized in three chapters. Chapter 1 gives the historic background of current inter-ethnic relations and of educational legislation in Estonia. Chapter 2 explains the relevant international legal standards for minority rights and the right to education. Chapter 3 examines if the national education system complies with international law and standards? In a second step policy questions relevant for integration are discussed including the policy documents on integration, segregation and multiculturalism.

The general conclusions show that Estonia is complying with its international legal obligations. However, these are rather vague and leave a wide margin of appreciation to states. In terms of educational realities Estonian authorities could improve aspects regarding the curricula and take steps towards the inclusion of all people affected by educational policies.

ACRONYM

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CERD	Convention on the Elimination on Racial Discrimination
CSCE/OSCE	Conference for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
CoE	Council of Europe
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ECRML	The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
ETA	The Equal Treatment Act.
FCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
HCNM	High Commissioner on National Minorities
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
PCIJ	Permanent Court of International Justice
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UN Declaration 1992	UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities 1992
UNESCO Convention	UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education

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