

MEMBERS OF THE SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIAGedimino pr. 53, 01109 Vilnius

Members of the Hungarian Parliament

3 November 2017

Dear Colleagues,

We are unpleasantly surprised and even shocked by the categorical statements of the Hungarian Government threatening to block Ukraine's rapprochement with the European Union or NATO, in the event that Ukraine does not change, in accordance with the wishes of Hungary, its new Law on Education that defines, *inter alia*, the specifics of education of people belonging to national minority groups.

We understand that the matters pertaining to education of national minorities and their integration into the life of the state are always particularly vulnerable and need to be tackled in a constructive dialogue. We see Ukraine's efforts to engage with these important issues namely in this manner. We understand that the neighbouring countries are also concerned about these issues and we thus wish you all the best in the intensive dialogue in good faith on all sides to find the most appropriate solutions.

We know from our experience that countries often succumb to the temptation to artificially dramatise the situation of their national minorities residing in the neighbouring states and turn this into one of powerful instruments of domestic policy, where parties engage in irrational race seeking to demonstrate their love for their fellow countrymen. We have already experienced all this and we have a clear understanding of the situation. Therefore, the neighbouring countries' focus on the Ukrainian Education Law has not come as a surprise.

However, what we are surprised about are the ultimatums of the Hungarian authorities warning Ukraine of the geopolitical consequences and threatening to block the efforts of Ukraine's integration into the European Union. Such ultimatums are utterly unacceptable, non-European and even more incomprehensible when delivered by one of Central European countries. We all know very well how geopolitically important to Central Europe and the Baltic States our own integration into the European Union was.

We also remember the huge scale of tragic sacrifice that Ukraine had to make after bravely announcing, in Maidan, about its decision on the European path of development. On the other hand, we are well aware of the huge efforts of Putin's regime attempting to stop Ukraine's European integration.

Is Hungary really ready to pursue the objectives that correspond to Putin's objectives in Ukraine?

We are convinced that such statements made by EU Member States, especially those which have recently joined the EU themselves, when they, due to some historical or current disagreements with their neighbours, announce of their intentions to block these countries' efforts to integrate into the EU, are wholly unacceptable. Such statements are absolutely incompatible with the European values of solidarity and the basic European goal of a united and free Europe.

We believe that these values remain also important to the current Hungarian politicians. Recalling the huge numbers of Hungarian victims in the fight for Hungary's freedom and the freedom of all of us during the Soviet era, we urge you to correct the harsh error of the Hungarian Government and do all in your power to help rather than hinder Ukraine along its way to freedom. Please remember the motto uniting Central Europe over the centuries "For Our Freedom and Yours!"

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