

# SPEAKING YOUR OWN LANGUAGE IS A EUROPEAN RIGHT

In his column Viktor Orbán, an elected autocrat (13/4), Luuk van Middelaar worries about Hungarian democracy and the rule of law. In his speech, he forgets to mention the situation in Hungary's neighboring countries. Two years after joining the European Union, in 2007, Slovakia issued a language law prohibiting the use of languages other than Slovak in public. While language rights, after the ethnic failure of Yugoslavia, were the condition for European integration of the former Soviet satellite states, where many language minorities live. Brussels stood by and looked at it.

Romania is also flouting European treaties on the free use of the Hungarian regional language. Our foundation has documented this in detail in the report Betrayal of law, published in 2016. And Ukraine, a few days after the entry into force of the Association Agreement with the European Union, passed a law that makes secondary education in the national minority languages impossible. The freedom to use one's own language is an important freedom in Europe. The European Union should work on its credibility by calling all the new European Member States to account for respect for democratic principles and the rule of law on the basis of the same objective criteria.

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