

UKRAINE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH EUROPEAN VALUES

Ukraine shows time and time again that it has nothing to do with important European freedoms, such as the freedom to speak your own language. Last month, the European Union's association agreement with Ukraine entered into force, despite the vote against by 61 percent of Dutch voters on 6 April 2016.

The Maastricht Treaty (1992) laid down the principles for far-reaching European integration. Following the ethnic failure of Yugoslavia, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was concluded in 1995. This is a legal foundation for ethnic stability and peace, guaranteeing the free use of national minority languages. Ratification of this treaty by the former Soviet satellite states was a tough admission requirement.

These rights are being observed in an exemplary manner in the original EU countries. Examples are Welsh in Great Britain, the Frisian language in the Netherlands and German in Belgium and Italy. In Ukraine, the parliament's first act after the Maidan revolution of 2014 was to restrict the language rights of ethnic Russians, Romanians and Hungarians.

That is why I campaigned for a 'no' vote in the consultative referendum on the Association Agreement with Ukraine. European integration is impossible if the European Union cannot live up to its own core values and core identity and enforce compliance with European treaties. The European Union itself is multilingual. If the European Union is unable to protect national minorities, its right to exist is morally indefensible.

Just four days after the entry into force of the Association Agreement, the first act of the Ukrainian Parliament was to pass an education law, which prohibits secondary and higher education in languages other than Ukrainian. Despite strong protests from all of Ukraine's European neighbours, President Poroshenko signed this law on 25 September. As a result, not only all Russian-speaking higher education institutions, but also one hundred Hungarian, one hundred and twenty Romanian and five Polish schools will have to close.

This planned ethnic cleansing is a disgrace to the European Union. Ukraine has thus once again demonstrated that it not only disregards core European values of freedom and multilingualism, but also ignores the Strasbourg Convention and the European Charter of Regional Languages that it has ratified. Ukraine's European integration is therefore a dead end.



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