

School education in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic

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HRWF (30.09.2016) - On 16-24 May and 3-9 June 2016, members of the well-known human rights organization *Memorial* visited the territories beyond the control of the Ukrainian authorities and collected some information about school education in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR). They inspected schools and talked to teachers and principals.

State of the school buildings

Education usually stopped during most intensive shelling or in schools which had been severely damaged but resumed in most cases on the first opportunity. Some schools were not reopened because there had been too much damage or because they were too close to the demarcation line.

Most school buildings which had been damaged had been prioritized for restoration work. In a number of cases, principals told the mission that they had never hoped in the past that their schools would be in such a good state.

Russification of school education in DNR: Statistics

In 2015, the DNR ministry of education approved a new school program. Currently, the education process mostly uses Russian textbooks received from Russia according to the needs.

The number of Ukrainian classes in schools has been dramatically reduced. Only two schools out of all those visited by Memorial had one Ukrainian class each. Other schools which used to be Ukrainian schools have none.

The number of hours devoted to learning the Ukrainian language has been strongly reduced and there is only one hour per week for Ukrainian literature.

The 2015 report of the DNR ministry of education (1) states that "*The need for language education by the population is fully satisfied. While, in 2014, 10.5% of the children in preschool education establishments were educated in Ukrainian and 89.5% in Russian, in 2015, 100% of the children receive school education in Russian at parental will.*"

The 'language issue' was however not 'fully solved' for secondary schools.

In 2015-2016 academic years, 6780 classes (97%) started in Russian with 125,984 pupils (98%). Only 170 classes (3%) started in Ukrainian with 2358 pupils (2%).

In 2014-2015 academic year, there were 4723 classes (65%) with Russian as education language and 99,202 pupils (71%); 40,519 pupils (29%) studied in 2496 classes (35%) with Ukrainian as their education language.

Thus the number of Russian classes grew by 2057 and the number of Ukrainian classes decreased by 2326.

DNR has

- 431 general education organizations (88%) implementing pedagogic activities only in Russian (without any Ukrainian classes)
- 3 in Ukrainian (1%) without any Russian classes
- 54 in both Russian and Ukrainian (11%).

Weekly hours provided by the 'basic plan' for Russian and Ukrainian languages (and literature) also deserve attention. The Russian language is given significantly more time everywhere, except in the 1st and 3rd grades in Ukrainian schools.

Memorial was told there is no shortage of teachers, they are all in place and receive their salaries in due time.

School education in Donetsk and Luhansk regions under Ukrainian control

The situation in schools located in the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions still controlled by the Ukrainian authorities is in marked contrast. The balance between the number of Russian and Ukrainian classes in schools before the conflict and in 2015-2016 hardly changed here. (2)

Academic year 2014-2015

Ukrainian schools: 327
 Russian schools: 76
 Bilingual schools: 213

Ukrainian classes: 5345 (61%)
 Russian classes: 3386 (39%)

Academic year 2015-2016

Ukrainian schools: 321
 Russian schools: 54
 Bilingual schools: 186

Ukrainian classes: 4862 (62%)
 Russian classes: 2924 (38%)

Conclusions

Human Rights Without Frontiers considers that the lingering geo-political situation is in the short run and the long run is to the benefit of the Moscow-backed separatists as the remaining Russian-speaking population is not looking any more to Kyiv. The longer this situation will last, the more difficult it will be for Kyiv to regain sovereignty on the territories currently beyond its control and their populations... Some observers even think that the current situation is already irreversible because the DNR and LNR populations will not freely choose any more to be reintegrated in the Ukrainian state and DNR as well as LNR will follow the path of Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria.

(1) http://mondnr.ru/?page_id=47857

(2) Data provided to *Memorial* by the desk responsible for norms and quality of preschool and general education at the department of education and science of Donetsk regional administration.