

## President of Latvia: children should learn one of the EU's official languages as their second foreign language

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On 3 February, President of Latvia Egils Levits welcomed Minister for Education and Science Anita Muižniece at the Riga Castle. Meeting focused on school network reform in Daugavpils, adding additional European Union (EU) official languages to curriculum of Latvian schools and current Covid-19 situation in schools.

President Levits and Minister Muižniece discussed current situation with Covid-19 testing of pupils and impact on delivering quality education in schools without forcing children to learn remotely. 'Better testing procedures at schools are our top priority to ensure that children can access quality education in schools in person,' said President Levits. This is heavily linked to the definition of close contact, said Minister Muižniece. Crisis Management Group has been tasked by the government to sort this issue out and also make sure testing is fully available.

Egils Levits and Anita Muižniece also discussed President's proposal to offer more EU official languages as the second choice for foreign language taught at school. 'Latvia is a member of the European Union, we are a part of Europe's culture and we share the same values as the EU. This should be adequately reflected in our school programme,' said President Levits. Minister Muižniece expressed support for President's proposal and underlined that it is very strongly linked to availability of properly trained teachers.

Egils Levits and Anita Muižniece also discussed the on-going school network reform in Daugavpils. According to President Levits, Daugavpils needs to strengthen its Latvian environment and Latvian schools and nurseries play a key role in achieving that. 'Daugavpils is one of those Latvian cities where the main focus should not be on strengthening of minority schools. It should rather focus on stronger integration into Latvian community. I expect a plan from Daugavpils in the coming weeks that will offer sufficient details about restructuring of its school network and strengthening of Latvian environment,' said Minister for Education and Science during the meeting.

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