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Subject: Problems of preparing national intelligentsia

Zechbures, gazhano eshjös! Hyvää päivää! Greetings, dear participants of this esteemed assembly. Before proceeding to topic of discussion, let me clarify the main content of the "intelligentsia" concept, as currently there are many different interpretations of this phenomenon.

As you all well know, the concept of "intelligentsia" (in Latin: intelligens - Mind, intelligence, understanding, the ability to think) was introduced by Cicero. He considered educated democracy to depict the intelligentsia. Today, there are at least two additional interpretations of this phenomenon. In a broad sense, the intelligentsia depicts persons of all social levels and professions, having intellectual interests in their daily lives and that for the components of the cultural environment of society. Intelligentsia depicts also those, who are professionally engaged in intellectual work and artistic creation, receiving income from this activity.

Along with a broad understanding of the term "intelligentsia", there is a narrower interpretation. In this key interpretation, the intelligentsia is considered as a part of the educated layer of the society, taking on the role of a spokesman for the interests of the people, (and) pretending to a role of their moral and spiritual shepherd and their representative before authorities. In this report, through raising educational issues of national intelligentsia, we shall focus on a broader - classic - interpretation of this definition.

Thus, based on the proposed definitions, the primary role of the national intelligentsia is to support and monitor a system of reproduction of knowledge and information on its ethnicity and language as well as to provide circulation of this information and to ensure progressive development of the national culture.

Hence, the role of the intelligentsia in the intercultural dialog takes place largely in spheres of science, education and culture.

So which are the factors influencing the emergence and formation of people who are ready to contribute to development of language and culture of their ethnic group?

1. First of all, it is the presence of the family institution that supports bilingualism and multilingualism. The attitude towards the language and culture of an ethnic group is forming specifically in the family. Particularly the experts say that the ideal for the formation of simultaneous bilingualism is coinciding at the beginning of your communication with your child in both languages, i.e. from the first month of his life. The later the second language is introduced to the child, the more clearly the first language dominates the second. Given the aforementioned, it is important that every parent understands the peculiarities of a psychophysiological development of the bilingual child, knowing the benefits of bilingual upbringing and education. As a positive experience on solving this issue, we can take a look at the experience of Udmurt bilingual center, created on the initiative of the Ministry of National policy of the Udmurt Republic. Its main purpose is to coordinate the work with parents, caretakers and educators.

From January to May of this year in the K. Gerd gymnasium series of seminars were conducted for parents raising bilingual children. Psychology specialists, speech therapists, psycholinguists and others were also present.

Also, a special website was created, on pages of which you can find answers to questions about theoretical and practical aspects on children's bilingualism, including useful links to researches by leading scientists in field of bilingualism, as well as online resources (educational games, stories, guidelines for conducting classes, etc.) in Udmurt language that can be used for children's preschool and early school speech development.

Naturally, it would be useful to have a consolidated site devoted to certain language groups, particularly, Udmurt, Mari, Mordovian and Komi. This is due to the fact that developing official languages is different from development of languages that do not have the status of an official language. Meanwhile, such online communities would allow conducting a discussion on a broader range of issues.

2. Another, but no less important factor in the emergence and formation of national intelligentsia, is the presence of a system of continuous education from kindergarten to high school. As the scientists note, each age has its own peculiarities of ethnic identity formation.

So if it's sufficient for preschool and primary stage education to give general information about the language and culture of the ethnic group, the middle stage must be focused on forming a positive image of the national language. In fact, at an age of 12-14 an adolescent starts becoming aware of his independence and starts re-evaluating his life values. Sometimes, while expressing his inner position, the child ceases to respond to his parents in his native language, but at the same time understands the speech addressed to him. At a more mature age, professional interests begin to determine the linguistic priorities as the young adult enters into the phase of independent life. That is why it is very important that linguistic knowledge would give advantages at admission to secondary and higher education institutions.

Thus, over the studying period at school, each child should get a basic knowledge package on language, culture and history of his people. However, further improvement of native language in professional occupation doesn't take place because national language teaching is usually carried out only at national faculties and departments. Meanwhile, to ensure that the younger generation wouldn't create myths about complexity of agglutinative Finno-Ugric languages and had enough information regarding the main stages of development of the region in which they are educated and live, it seems quite logical to include disciplines in the study of language and verbal culture of the Finno-Ugric peoples in the educational programs of all secondary and higher educational institutions located in the Finno-Ugric regions. The Mordovian N.P. Ogarev State University has a certain experience regarding this issue. The university plans start the teaching of Mordovian languages in all institutes and faculties of the university.

3. Another factor influencing the identity formation of the national intelligentsia is the availability of scientific and educational centers (national faculties, institutes and departments) because that completes the strengthening of younger generation's behavioral component.

If we look at the reformation of the higher education system in the Russian Federation and other European countries, it is easy to notice that while reforming the educational system in general, and in the context of changes in the language policy practice of the Russian Federation in the 1990s, many national faculties appeared in the national regions of Russian Federation, in particular, in Mari-El State university, Syktyvkar State University, Udmurt State University and others. The appearance of these departments gave a powerful push to developing national consciousness of the youngsters, which is reflected by the emergence of a definitely new type of national faculty graduate. They are citizens of their own republic, having an active life position, skillfully promoting their native language and standing up to position themselves as Udmurtians, for example.

However, further processes of reforming the higher education system gradually began to move in the opposite direction with respect to the system of national education. Reduction in the amount of affordable education in humanitarian sector has led to a massive merger of faculties, departments, disrupting the human resource reproduction system etc. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the merger of faculties, institutes and departments is not unique to the Russian educational system, while such changes are taking place also in universities in Finland, Hungary and Estonia. Thus, there is a general trend towards reducing humanitarian studies in the modern society.

Keeping this in mind, perhaps, one should approach the Ministries of Education in our countries with a request to provide affordable education quotas not for whole field of education of the entire university because such an approach would be subject to a human factor, but specifically for areas that are training the national specialists. Securing of the admission quotas will allow a more systematic and planned development of national institutions and departments. Also, educational standards should be adjusted with regard to group formation (which today is 1:12) in order to train specialists that are involved in solving national issues. The change in these standards would make it possible to train specialists in different areas that are in demand in the regional job market. In particular, nowadays, due to the absence of a possibility to form small-sized groups, none of the Finno-Ugric regions conduct targeted education in field of translation and translation studies from national languages into Russian. This in turn leads to the escape of the national literature into its own community.

The whole array of problems is connected with the preparation of teachers for the higher education. First of all, the aging of teachers can eventually lead to closure of scientific schools and entire areas of professional training. On the other hand, the reduction in the number of affordable education quotas leads to the fact that young people do not have the possibility to enlist themselves on the chairs. Thus, it is very important to create a targeted state program that includes social support for enlisting the young professionals of Finno-Ugric studies in universities and research centers. Only this approach allows preserving the best traditions of training the national specialists.

4. Another necessary condition for the formation of national intelligentsia, is the presence of youth organizations that are actively involved in social and political life of the region. This question is traditionally discussed in each Congress and I am happy that each region has a such kind of youth community. But when considering the education of the national intelligentsia, it's noteworthy to mention separately that the scientific aspect is left aside. The current state of the Finno-Ugric studies could be raised to a higher level by creating a network of schools of young Finno-Ugric scientists with various fields of science for conducting scientific seminars at the Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University etc.

5. Another factor that affects the formation of the ideological component of the intelligentsia as a translator of cultural values of their ethnic group, is the existence of partnerships both in domestic and international, scientific and educational environment. It should be noted that in connection with the human resource management reorganization taking place in almost all institutions an opportunity for academic mobility is being reduced. In particular, due to changes in the provisions of the scholarship programs of the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) in Finland, only post-graduate students can take advantage of the internship opportunities in the framework of "Programs of kindred peoples". Undergraduates, however, who could earlier participate in the given program are currently not able to do so. Meanwhile, not all universities today have post-graduate students in Finno-Ugric studies. The situation is similar with the Hungarian scholarship programs. In particular, according to official documents, the Hungarian students could previously participate in the International Summer Courses of Udmurt language on a fixed quota. Since this year they have lost such opportunity. Thus, it would be advisable to fix quotas for the Finno-Ugric regions in international scholarship programs.

There is a lot to talk on the training problems of the national specialists. If the intelligentsia performs "the job of an accumulator and keeper of knowledge and culture of the people" (T. V. Ermakov), it's very important that today's Congress would fix the flaw, which is typical for the global humanities. As noted by B.I. Kalbachevsky, "reduction of the humanitarian disciplines can lead to a shift of systemic worldview of a graduate towards a mosaic one. This means a loss of possibility to judge the occurring processes in the country and the community."

Our task today is to prepare professionals who are able to maintain and increase our national cultural values.