



**THE LANGUAGE  
SITUATION  
IN LATVIA**

2010–2015

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***The Language Situation in Latvia: 2010-2015.*** A sociolinguistic study.  
(***Valodas situācija Latvijā: 2010-2015.*** Sociolingvistisks pētījums.)

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This study analyzes the dynamics of the language situation between 2010 and 2015, discussing the language proficiency and language use of Latvia's residents in various sociolinguistic domains, the existing proficiency of various languages in society, and the position of these languages within the linguistic environment. Other topics discussed include the events significant to the implementation of language policy that occurred during this period and the language situation in the Latvian diaspora. At the end of each chapter, there is a summary of the main conclusions and recommendations for implementing language policy in the future. In this study, as in the study published by LVA analyzing the previous period (2004-2010), there is discussion of the development and events which have occurred for the two communities mentioned in the State Language Law and which are significant in Latvia's cultural history and linguistic environment. These are the spoken and written forms of the Latgalian variety of Latvian and the indigenous Livonian language.

This study is based on quantitative as well as qualitative survey results, which are analyzed in the context of the newest theories and insights offered by the global sociolinguistic community. This study will be useful to all organizations involved in implementing language policy, to linguists, to students of sociology and history as well as to university lecturers. At the end of this volume, a broad collection of literature and sources used in this study is provided. The goal of this is to inspire the reader to independent research and further study.

#### **Authors**

Ina Druviete, Valts Ernštreits, Kerttu Kibbermann, Gunta Kļava, Evija Kļave, Indra Lapinska, Dite Liepa, Solvita Pošeiko, Sanda Roze, Inese Šūpule

#### **Scientific editor**

Linda Lauze

#### **Editor-in-Chief**

Gunta Kļava

#### **Literary editor**

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#### **Reviewers**

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#### **Proofreader**

Benjamin Alex Borek-Coxen

#### **Design and layout**

Aija Andžāne, Gints Roderts

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# **THE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN LATVIA: 2010–2015**

A sociolinguistic study



Latvian Language Agency

2017

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# FOREWORD

This study analyzes the dynamics of the language situation between 2010 and 2015, which is a continuation of the previous studies conducted by the Latvian Language Agency (Latviešu valodas aģentūra – LVA). The goal of these studies is to summarize the results of language policy and determine future directions for associated work. The events that occurred during the period analyzed by this study have challenged the basis for the existence of the Latvian state (i.e., the 2012 referendum on the question of whether Russian should be granted official language status in Latvia alongside Latvian) and have proven the importance of considered language management and the active involvement of every Latvian speaker. Therefore, more attention is devoted in the study specifically towards the questions of Latvian language proficiency and its further development, as well as language use in various domains and circumstances. As the study concludes, when we consider the sensitive nature of language and questions relating to language, various opinions and even stereotypes within society play a significant role.

Chapter 1 describes the current position of Latvian in the world, taking into account globalization trends, circumstances of language competition, and factors affecting the survival and future of languages. Chapters 2 and 3 analyze Latvian language proficiency and usage on the part of Latvia's residents in various sociolinguistic domains, proficiency in various languages and the position of these languages in the linguistic environment where the pressures of language competition can still be felt. This has created a considerable offset between Latvian language proficiency and use, which has meant heightened attention being given specifically to the linguistic attitude of native speakers of Latvian as well as to members of the ethnic minority community. Trends at least on a declarative level are positive, with actual language use increasing in practice (with the exception of several significant domains of language use, for example, mass media). This is the reason why in the future attention must be directed mainly toward linguistic attitudes and this, in fact, must be done by every speaker.

The changes that can happen to a language and the speed with which one language can replace another is shown precisely by the changes in Latvian language proficiency in the diaspora, which are described in Chapter 4. At the same time, the ways in which the government can influence and help by promoting Latvian language acquisition in the world – in the diaspora as well as to anyone interested (because Latvian is also interesting outside of Latvia (!)) – are described in Chapter 5.

As in the previous study published by the LVA analyzing the language situation between 2004-2010, the situation of the two communities mentioned in the State Language Law, considered meaningful within Latvia's cultural history and

linguistic environment, is also reviewed. These are the spoken and written forms of the Latgalian variety of Latvian and the indigenous Livonian language. Their development and the main processes observed in the communities who speak them are discussed in Chapter 6 and 7.

Events which have prompted especially active discussion within society are discussed in Chapter 8. This chapter maps out the twofold nature of the mass media – as an information source for society, but also as an influencer of society – and its role in implementing language policy.

The main conclusions and recommendations for further work in promoting an increase in the use of Latvian and the securing of its status are summarized at the end of each chapter. At the end of this volume, a broad collection of literature and sources used for this study is provided. The goal of this is to inspire readers and researchers on to independent research and further study.

Events relating to the language situation, which occurred during the period this book covers, are powerful evidence that every single spoken and written word in Latvian is important to the securing and development of Latvian. This is always true, not only at critical moments when we must all go together to the voting booth to prove that the Latvian language is the foundation of this country and society.

Respectfully and with gratitude to the authors of these studies,  
G. Kļava, Editor-in-Chief  
June 14, 2016

# ABBREVIATIONS

- 2009 LVA Survey – *Latvijas valodas situācijas sociolingvistiskā izpēte*. [A sociolinguistic study of the language situation in Latvia.] Contracting authority: LVA. Survey conducted by: Data Serviss, 2009
- 2012 LVA Survey – *Valodas situācijas sociolingvistiskā izpēte. Kvantitatīvā pētījuma rezultātu ziņojums*. [A sociolinguistic study of the language situation. A report of the results of this quantitative study.] Contracting authority: LVA. Survey conducted by: SIA Aptauju aģentūra, 2012
- 2014 LVA Survey – *Valodas situācijas sociolingvistiskā izpēte. Kvantitatīvā pētījuma rezultātu ziņojums*. [A sociolinguistic study of the language situation. A report of the results of this quantitative study.] Contracting authority: LVA. Survey conducted by: SIA Excolo Latvia, 2014
- CSP – Central Statistical Bureau (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde)
- CVK – Central Election Commission (Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija)
- DU – Daugavpils University (Daugavpils Universitāte)
- EC – European Commission
- ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
- ELA – European Latvian Association (Eiropas Latviešu apvienība)
- EPL – Electronic Mass Media Law (Elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu likums)
- ESF – European Social Fund
- EU – European Union
- IZM – Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija)
- KM – Ministry of Culture (Kultūras ministrija)
- LgSC – Latgale Student Center (Latgales Studentu centrs)
- LKB – Latgalian Cultural Society (Latgaliešu kultūras biedrība)
- LU – University of Latvia (Latvijas Universitāte)
- LVA – Latvian Language Agency (Latviešu valodas aģentūra)
- LVAK – Latvian Language Development Group of the Rīga Latvian Association (Rīgas Latviešu biedrības Latviešu valodas attīstības kopa)
- LVEK – State Language Center Latvian Language Expert Commission (Valsts valodas centra Latviešu valodas ekspertu komisija)

LVLKSA – Association of Latgalian Language, Literature, and Cultural History Teachers (Latgaliešu valodas, literatūras un kultūrvēstures skolotāju asociāciju)

LZA – Latvian Academy of Sciences (Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmija)

MK – Cabinet of Ministers (Ministru kabinets)

PBLA – World Federation of Free Latvians (Pasaules Brīvo latviešu apvienība)

PMLP – Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (Pilsonības un migrācijas lietu pārvalde)

RA – Rēzekne College (Rēzeknes Augstskola)

REGI – Research Institute of Regional Studies at the Rēzekne Higher Education Institution (Rēzeknes Tehnoloģiju akadēmijas Reģionālistikas zinātniskais institūts)

RTA – Rēzekne Higher Education Institution (Rēzeknes Tehnoloģiju akadēmija)

SIF – Society Integration Foundation (Sabiedrības integrācijas fonds)

SKDS 2014 – *Piederības sajūta Latvijai*. [A sense of belonging to Latvia.] Sabiedriskās domas pētījumu centrs SKDS. Rīga, 2014

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

VISC – National Centre for Education (Valsts izglītības satura centrs)

VKF – State Culture Capital Foundation (Valsts Kultūrkapitāla fonds)

VVC – State Language Center (Valsts valodas centrs)

VVPP – State Language Proficiency Examination (Valsts valodas prasmes pārbaude)

WWF – World Wildlife Fund





# **LATVIAN IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROCESSES**

(Ina Druviete)

**No language is an island, entire of itself**

"No language is an island, entire of itself" – this thought, rephrased from the words of the English poet John Donne regarding the nature of man and his dissimilarity from an isolated island are often repeated by both wordsmiths and those who write language policy. This truth has taken on a special meaning in recent decades, when borders between nations in both the real and virtual world have become ever more imperceptible, international cooperation more intense, the mobility of individuals and ideas freer. Globalization, internationalization, and other *-ation* processes possess qualities affecting all parts of the world, and also have an effect on the linguistic expression of peoples, society, and every individual. The tendency across the world since at least the 1990s to maintain those features unique to each ethnicity, country, and region alongside those held in common with all of humanity has resulted in a struggle between the forces of globalization and localization, with either one or the other tendency pushing with varying degrees of success at every moment towards dominance.

In recent years a search for balance and compromise has been at the center of attention – this has not infrequently been referred to as *glocalization*. The economic, intellectual, and cultural relationships among countries, as well as a unified digital information space has made it possible to harmoniously, to a greater or lesser extent, combine inherited and borrowed elements of identity; in the majority of countries across the world special laws have been adopted or national level programs have been enacted in order to protect the most significant elements of national identity (folklore, traditional lifeways, religions, languages, and so on). Still, there is anxiousness in the public space of all countries regarding the possible endangerment or even loss of their unique identity. Most often an exchange of views results in developments with respect to language.

Latvia, in this sense, is no exception, and perhaps things are even more intense here – there are not many countries where the presence of thoughts and viewpoints on language is as lasting and intense in political debates, the media, scientific and popular scientific articles, and even in informal conversation; at times this even takes on an almost myth-like quality (Druviete 2010a). In this discourse, language endangerment is clearly defined or, to use scientific terminology, themes of language loss and linguistic assimilation are expressed. The objective language situation is undeniably at the root of this. With the exception of the periods of Latvian national independence, the Latvian language has existed in a subordinate position relative to other powerful competing languages.

Still, one could make the assumption that emphasizing language endangerment as a way to ensure the use and quality of Latvian is also rooted in traditional conceptions regarding the actual arguments for changing societal attitudes. At this time, special studies into historical sociolinguistics, which would allow one to precisely follow the connection between thoughts and ideas in the realm of linguistic attitudes, have yet to be conducted; however, even a fragmentary analysis

The myth of Latvian  
language endangerment?

shows that the idea of language endangerment is received as an indisputable fact, which enters into one's social awareness either through upbringing or education.

When exactly the idea that the nature of the existence of Latvian was problematic first entered public awareness in Latvia is still a question that must be studied. The authors of the first Latvian dictionaries and grammars in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, following the tradition of the European, especially German, linguistic scholarship of the period, did not identify a broader motivation for their work dealing with language normalization. A quote from the famous Baltic German pastor and folklorist August Bielenstein: "*Die Lettische Sprache* has been written independent of any national passions or precepts of the powers that be regarding the direction of history. This work satisfies the interest of a researcher who also studies the bones of Ichthyosaurs and the shells of long extinct species of Infusoria without being able, or even wishing, to call them once more back to life," (Bielenšteins 1864) – shows how at that moment there was more of a wish in this situation to justify researching Latvian in politically-correct terms than there was to make pronouncements regarding the coming demise of Latvian as such. However, the presence of a motif of language stability is undeniable present from approximately the 1870s. This can be associated with the growing tendencies towards Russification and the battle for dominance between German and Russian. Bielenstein, at the time head of the Baltic German "Latviešu literāriskā biedrība" (Latvian Literary Society), made more noteworthy statements. At the Society's general meeting in 1885, he said: "Why not express that which is as clearly visible as the sun in the sky or shadows in the evening? Why hide that which is not any kind of a secret? [...] The facts are as follows: 1) Russian will be introduced as the language of instruction in schools. Schools will come under the authority of the Ministry of Education, separating them from the body of the region's evangelical [Lutheran] church. 2) Russian will be necessary in the clerical work of the parish administration. The same can be said for parish courts. There is nothing else to say. Though this is only the beginning, it still shows clearly enough that the Latvian language no longer has any prospect of spreading in the region, in schools or institutions. *Ex ungue leonem!* It was possible to compete with German, but not with Russian – the state language. Latvian high schools alongside German high schools were at least conceivable, but Latvian schools next to Russian ones are completely unimaginable. 1885 ends every Latvian desire and hope." (quote according to Krolls, 1933)

When speaking of the strengthening of the position of Latvian, it is usually the earliest Latvian cultural figures who are mentioned; in addition to urging people to speak Latvian and engaging in the practical work of refining and enriching Latvian, they also used, as either a direct or indirect argument, the idea that language loss could not be permitted. We can mention, for example, Atis Kronvalds' observation that "[...] an entire nation cannot leave its language in the manner in which it pulls off wool mittens" (Kronvalds 1869) and K. Milenbahs' reminder that "when a language dies, its nation dies, too" (Milenbahs 1881).

A historical insight into  
questions of language  
survival in Latvia

It is noteworthy that in the 1920s and 1930s, there were discussions regarding the use of Latvian in particular areas such as higher education, but less about the continued existence of the language as such. During the Soviet period, the disappearance of languages was a taboo topic, though over the course of only a few decades more than one hundred nationalities were assimilated. The topic of language endangerment resounded with particular force around 1988, when it became one of the main arguments for the restoration of the independence of several nations (see “Latviešu valoda” at [www.barikadopedija.lv](http://www.barikadopedija.lv)).

But how are things now? On a social level (in tweets, interviews, internet comments), apocalyptic prognoses regarding the future of the Latvian people and the viability of their language can be found fairly often. Despite the fact that the opinion of specialists and experts is not so pessimistic, the presence of a feeling of endangerment is undeniable. What, then, is the truth? In worrying about our language are we different from other nations? Is it possible to objectively predict the long-term viability of a language? Let us examine the situation of Latvian in the context of the global sociolinguistic situation and the newest scientific theories.

## 1.1. From scientific study to language protection

The fact that languages can become extinct only began to be truly realized by anthropologists and linguists at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially during the years around 1920. Thanks to the initiative of Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Leonard Bloomfield, and other researchers, a type of structural linguistics – descriptive linguistics or American structuralism – established itself in the United States. The first task of these researchers was to collect information about the quickly disappearing Native American cultures and languages, documenting specifics about each language and attempting to establish a link between each language and the lifeways, world view, and material as well as non-material culture of its speakers. Since 1934, the Summer Linguistics Institute, using the methods of descriptivism, began to create for missionary purposes written forms for unwritten languages. Practical efforts directed towards the protection of the languages and cultures being described were not included among the range of interests of these scientists.

In the 1960s and 1970s, studies concerning language contact, language death and rebirth, multilingualism and language policy in specific countries began to develop intensively in sociolinguistics (Uriel Weinreich, Charles Albert Ferguson, John Joseph Gumperz, Einar Haugen, and many others). Language policy as a branch of science gained a strong theoretical foundation. But only in the final decade of the last century did the Linguistic Society of America, one of the most respected professional linguistics organizations in the world, begin to raise the alarm concerning language endangerment, especially in Australia, South America and North America. This organization, basing its reasoning mainly on Michael Krauss’s study grounded in geolinguistics and ecolinguistics, estimated that

Organizations working  
with language  
maintenance and  
endangered language  
documentation

only 10% of the world's languages can be considered to not be endangered in the long term, and that 90% of the world's languages would disappear by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Krauss 1992). Since then the long-term viability of languages has been widely discussed in both scientific literature and popular scientific publications. In addition, several non-governmental and scientific organizations work actively to document the current state of languages and to work out proposals for their survival. These include The Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, Linguapax, The World Language Documentation Centre, Foundation for Endangered Languages, Gesellschaft für bedrohte Sprachen.

The connection between linguistic diversity and biological diversity has become especially popular and is being actively promoted by organizations such as The Language and Ecology Research Forum and Terralingua. Those in favor of the ecological approach draw parallels between the diversity of languages and species, which can be expressed not only by the number of languages, but also by the number of language speakers, which is important in exactly the same way that the number of members of a particular species is. For example, there are ten languages spoken in two regions, but in the first region the speakers of a particular language make up 10% of the population, and in the other region they account for 90%. This means that in the second case, the total number of speakers of each of the other nine languages will only make up 1%. As a result, these languages will be more endangered, as their speakers will be more likely to choose to speak the more widespread language. Correlations between living and non-living natural resources and language diversity really do exist. The greatest language diversity exists in the most ecologically diverse regions, such as Papua New Guinea and Central Africa. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) identifies 238 regions in the world which are the most significant in terms of their ecological vitality; these regions are also those with the greatest amount of ethnolinguistic diversity. Researchers especially emphasize the fact that these regions show a singular relationship between nature, culture, and language, which makes these languages essential in studies of general linguistics, the philosophy of linguistics, ethnolinguistics, and other subfields. However, drawing parallels between linguistic diversity and the diversity of biological species has also been severely criticized – it has been noted that language is radically different and is a distinguishing characteristic for only one living species and that the origin of human language, as well as the diversification of one form of communication into many thousands, is a unique process.

The approach of British psychologist Daniel Nettle has gained attention; it considers separately such closely connected categories as language richness (the number of languages or language varieties within a particular geographic region), the phylogenetic diversity of languages (the genetic classification of languages spoken within a region), and the structural diversity of languages (the typological classification of languages) (Nettle 1999). This approach has been expanded in the work of the renowned sociolinguist Suzanne Romaine (Nettle, Romaine 2000, Romaine 2013) as well as in the work of Luisa Maffi (Maffi 2001,

**Why do languages become extinct?**

2003) and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). The decline in the genetic and typological diversity of languages is primarily a result of the decrease in the number of spoken languages. It is therefore understandable that primary attention is devoted specifically to language survival.

Why are languages disappearing in the world today? When in the 21<sup>st</sup> century physical genocide against an ethnicity – the speakers of a particular language – occurs, as the exception rather than the rule, the main reason is the parents' and grandparents' inability to – or desire not to – pass on their language to subsequent generations. In previous centuries, the main reasons for language shifts were colonization and trade contact, but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one of the factors prompting rapid linguistic assimilation is intensive urbanization. It is estimated that in 2050, approximately 70% of the population will live in cities and that these individuals will end up choosing the more widely used language in this contact situation. Several decades can pass until a language completely disappears, but use of that language may be restricted to only a limited number of sociolinguistic domains and groups of speakers.

Since its establishment, UNESCO has considered the preservation of linguistic diversity to be an important mission. Its project "The Red Book of Languages in Danger of Disappearing" gathered materials about languages which are threatened with extinction in the near future. Special attention was given to languages which were unique from a genetic or typological standpoint. The project also sought to inform responsible institutions within each country, the speakers of the languages themselves, and society at large of the necessity of preserving linguistic diversity and the means by which this could be achieved.

But why is it important to maintain linguistic diversity? The UNESCO Expert Group on Endangered Languages gives a clear answer to this question: "Language diversity is essential to human heritage. Each and every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people. [...]The extinction of each language results in the irrecoverable loss of unique cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge. Each language is a unique expression of the human experience of the world. Thus, the knowledge of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions of the future. Every time a language dies, we have less evidence for understanding patterns in the structure and function of human language, human prehistory, and the maintenance of the world's diverse ecosystems." (UNESCO 2003, 1-2)

### **How many languages are there in the world?**

Is it possible to precisely state the total number of languages spoken in the world – especially, taking into account the difficulty involved in distinguishing languages from their variants and dialects as well as the fact that there are parts of the world whose cultural and linguistic character has not yet been fully documented? Currently, it is acknowledged that we will never be able to cite a precise number; however, we have been able to approximate the overall picture in most respects.

**Why should languages be saved from extinction?**

The Dallas-based non-governmental non-profit organization, SIL International (previously the Summer Linguistic Institute, an organization devoted to language documentation and the development of writing systems for these languages, originally for the purposes of Bible translation) has devoted itself especially to language description. In 2014, SIL International had 4400 employees in 86 countries. During the course of its 80 years of work, it has given its support to the development of more than 2100 languages and has archived approximately 32,700 documents of a linguistic nature. The factual information provided by SIL International is used by practically all researchers working in the field of language documentation and maintenance. As indicated by Bernard Spolsky, “language preservation is a unique problem of language policy, which is completely different from the communications problems resulting from multilingualism. [...] If speakers see that attention is being given to their language and that it is being described, this raises the speakers’ sense of self-worth, and they begin to use their language in conversations and with their children. In this way, though individuals working to save languages – scientists, foundations, and organizations – may have purely linguistic goals, their work may also have a socially beneficial effect” (Spolsky 2011, 238-239).

Since 1934, this organization has compiled data on the world’s languages, and since 1951, the encyclopedic catalog it has compiled, the *Ethnologue*, has been recognized as the most extensive and authoritative source of information on this topic (*Encyclopedia of the World’s Endangered Languages* 2007). The *Ethnologue* provides information on the world’s languages, their various designations, their numbers of speakers, genetic and typological affiliation, the scripts these languages utilize, and the sociolinguistic function of these languages. Special attention is devoted to describing the situation of each language across different world regions and in particular countries. This information is also supplemented with maps. However, even this organization’s own experts acknowledge that the statistical data, especially total numbers of speakers, may be incomplete, as these have been gathered from different sources – official census data, linguistic studies, and even from reports submitted by individual missionaries.

The catalog also allows the reader to find information regarding multilingualism in different countries. For example, 50% of the world’s total languages are spoken in just eight countries: India (447 languages), Brazil (229), Mexico (283), Australia (245), Indonesia (706), Nigeria (526), Papua New Guinea (839), Cameroon (280). As of 2015, the languages with the most speakers are Chinese (1 billion, 197 million), Spanish (399 million), English (335 million), Hindi (260 million), Arabic (242 million), Portuguese (203 million), Bengali (189 million), and Russian (166 million).

The data concerning the total number of speakers of world languages and the breakdown of these languages by percentage are especially significant (Table 1), as these clearly show that 96% of the world’s population speaks 4% of the world’s languages and only 394 languages have 1 million or more speakers.

**Multilingualism  
in the world**

| Number of speakers           | Number of languages | % of total world languages |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 100 million – > 1 billion    | 8                   | 0.1                        |
| 10 million – < 100 million   | 82                  | 1.2                        |
| 1 million – < 10 million     | 304                 | 5.5                        |
| 100 thousand – < 1 million   | 943                 | 13.3                       |
| 10 thousand – < 100 thousand | 1822                | 25.7                       |
| 1 thousand – < 10 thousand   | 1982                | 27.9                       |
| 100 – < 1 thousand           | 1065                | 15.0                       |
| 10 – < 100                   | 338                 | 4.8                        |
| 1 – < 10                     | 140                 | 2.0                        |
| 0                            | 206                 | 2.9                        |
| Unknown number of speakers   | 212                 | 3.0                        |
| Total                        | 7102                | 100.0                      |

Table 1. The total number of speakers of world languages and the percentage of each group of languages constituting the total number of world languages

### How many languages are there in the world currently?

Language and speaker counts differ not only from source to source, but also within *Ethnologue* reports themselves. Between 1951 and 2015, the *Ethnologue* had 18 editions and in each of these the total number of included languages differs. For example, the first edition mentions only 46 languages, the seventh edition mentions 4493, the fifteenth edition – 7299, the sixteenth edition – 7296, the seventeenth edition – 7479, but in the most recent, eighteenth, edition, published in May 2015 mentions 7472 languages. At first, this record was supplemented with languages unknown to Western scientists until that time, but in more recent editions the increase in languages is most often due to language variants being reclassified as separate languages. SIL International also maintains the website *ScriptSource* ([www.scriptsource.org](http://www.scriptsource.org)), which contains information on 251 alphabets, 4815 writing systems, and their possibilities for use in the digital environment.

Since 1984, every language has been given a three-letter code, which was later adapted to the ISO 639-2 and then ISO 639-3 standards. This system also makes it possible to follow language divergence processes. For example, Latvian is assigned the code *lav* (it should be noted that this contains the Latgalian variant *ltg* and the Latvian literary language or standard language *lvs*). In the electronic catalog, information on the total number of language speakers, the status of the language, its rating according to the EGIDS scale, its script, its degree of development as well as linguistic resources are available on the *Open Language Archives* ([www.language-archives.org](http://www.language-archives.org)).

The eighteenth edition, published a year after the previous edition, contains 12,000 new facts and pieces of updated information about 4447 languages in accordance with the ISO 639-3 classification. 17 languages are no longer included in (11 having been recognized as dialects of other languages and the existence of 6 languages has not been confirmed); however, 13 living languages have been added (7 newly identified, 6 having been classified in error as extinct). The eighteenth edition mentions 7102 living languages – four fewer than in 2014 (when the 17<sup>th</sup> edition was published), as well as 367 recently extinct languages. This number does not contain ancient or classical languages (though these have classification codes according to the ISO 639-3 standard); if these are used, for example, for religious purposes, they are included in the “dormant” language, or the EGIDS 9, category.

Therefore, we can assume that, as of 2015, there are 7102 living languages in the world. However, observations in just the last 80 years show that the linguistic diversity of the world has had a decreasing tendency. In line with the philosophy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this fact is viewed negatively and all countries and their governments and non-governmental organizations are putting their efforts, to a greater or lesser extent, towards supporting endangered languages. But can we define the real situation of a language, its level of stability and endangerment, and in this way design a concrete language policy for a country?

## 1.2. Describing the state of a language

For several decades now, sociolinguists have been attempting to work out a Scale that compares the state of languages based on objective criteria. The most popular of these up until now has been the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), designed in 1991 by Joshua Fishman (Fishman 1991) and containing 8 levels describing the state of a language. (See Table 2.)

| Level | Description                                                                                                                           |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | The language is used in education, work, mass media, government at the nationwide level.                                              |
| 2     | The language is used for local and regional mass media and governmental services.                                                     |
| 3     | The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders.                                                      |
| 4     | Literacy in the language is transmitted through education.                                                                            |
| 5     | The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form throughout the community.                      |
| 6     | The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language.                              |
| 7     | The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it with their elders but is not transmitting it to their children. |
| 8     | The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.                                                |

Table 2. Joshua Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

In parallel with efforts to design a scale showing the relative stability of languages, it also became popular to associate objective and subjective factors in order to outline the future prospects of languages. Since the 1980s, the ethnolinguistic viability concept of Howard Giles and his co-authors (Giles, Bourhis, Taylor 1977) has become popular and continues to be updated in order to more precisely describe the interaction of linguistic, social, and psychological factors in language contact situations.

#### Ethnolinguistic vitality

Ethnolinguistic vitality is defined as the ability for a language community in contact with other language communities to act as a distinct and dynamic unit. The more dynamic a language community is, the more prospect it has of survival, even in a situation characterized by intense language competition. The objective parameters of ethnolinguistic identity are quantitative and can therefore be measured. However, subjective factors are even more meaningful – linguistic attitude, linguistic behavior, traditions, and so on. The influence of these factors on a language's survival is decisive.

#### “Cold” and “hot” attitudes towards language

M. Lynn Landweer, based on the analysis of 300 language communities, has suggested taking into account, in addition to other significant factors for determining ethnolinguistic vitality, the degree to which a language community is able to resist the influence of a dominant culture, the types of code-switching and its frequency, linguistic attitudes in different social strata, the linguistic behavior of immigrants, the prestige of the language relative to other languages, the degree to which the community views itself as unique as well as how others outside the community view it (Landweer 2000). The terms “cold” and “hot” have also become popular with respect to describing attitudes towards language. “Cold” community members recognize in an intellectual sense their membership in a particular ethnolinguistic community, but this association is not emotionally meaningful to them; the ethnolinguistic vitality of this group is guaranteed by its self-sufficiency and well-functioning official institutions. As pointed out by Martin Ehala, this is how the majority of Western societies function (Ehala 2011, 192). On the other hand, if a community is not politically or economically self-sufficient, if its language exists in active competition with another language or languages, and society views this language as endangered, a “hot” attitude towards the language is necessary, as without this attitude linguistic assimilation would occur over the course of just a few generations. Thus, the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality is still being developed; however, its main parameters for defining weak, moderate, or strong vitality are already clearly defined. (See Table 3.)

| Demographic factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Institutional support                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Status with respect to other languages used within the region                                                                                                                        | Linguistic attitude                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Number of speakers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- total number,</li> <li>- birth rate / death rate,</li> <li>- age pyramid,</li> <li>- endogamous/ exogamous,</li> <li>- emigration/ immigration.</li> </ul> <b>Division of speakers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in traditional historic territories,</li> <li>- percentage in the country/ regions,</li> <li>- proportion relative to speakers of other languages in the country.</li> </ul> | <b>Support for official use in:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- education,</li> <li>- government,</li> <li>- economy,</li> <li>- media,</li> <li>- armed forces and police,</li> <li>- culture,</li> <li>- politics.</li> </ul> <b>State financial support in:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sports activities,</li> <li>- religious organizations,</li> <li>- non-governmental institutions.</li> </ul> | <b>Historic prestige.</b><br><br><b>International and regional status.</b><br><br><b>The socioeconomic status of speakers.</b><br><br><b>Proportion in the linguistic landscape.</b> | <b>A “hot” or “cold” attitude.</b><br><br><b>Use in informal conversations.</b><br><br><b>Public rhetoric concerning this language.</b><br><br><b>Language transmission to the next generation.</b> |

Table 3. The ethnolinguistic vitality of a language community

The updated version of Fishman’s classification scale, the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), designed in 2010, takes ethnolinguistic vitality into account for the most part (Lewis & Simons 2010). It contains 13 levels, to which the authors have given descriptive designations. (See Table 4.).

The authors of this new classification scheme have divided two of the original levels into finer divisions in accordance with the language endangerment levels of another classifications system, the *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (Moseley 2010). In preparing the seventeenth edition of the *Ethnologue*, all 7460 languages (both living and extinct) were evaluated according to the EGIDS scale. These contained all the languages in the database in 2013 according to the renewed ISO 639-3 (2007) standard, as well as languages which had become extinct since 1950. If there was no information about a language in the database (and there were about 3100 such languages), it would initially be classified as being in Group 6a, but then its status would be defined with the help of surveys and expert analysis.

**A scale of ethnolinguistic vitality**

| Level | Language Classification | Description                                                                                                                                              | UNESCO                |
|-------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 0     | International           | The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.                                                      | Safe                  |
| 1     | National                | The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.                                                               | Safe                  |
| 2     | Provincial              | The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.                                | Safe                  |
| 3     | Wider Communication     | The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.                                   | Safe                  |
| 4     | Educational             | The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education. | Safe                  |
| 5     | Developing              | The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some, though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.            | Safe                  |
| 6a    | Vigorous                | The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.                                                 | Safe                  |
| 6b    | Threatened              | The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.                                                      | Vulnerable            |
| 7     | Shifting                | The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.                                         | Definitely endangered |
| 8a    | Moribund                | The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.                                                     | Severely endangered   |
| 8b    | Nearly extinct          | The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.             | Critically endangered |
| 9     | Dormant                 | The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.                           | Extinct               |
| 10    | Extinct                 | The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.                                               | Extinct               |

Table 4. The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

M. Paul Lewis and Gary F. Simons have also calculated how the 7480 languages present in the seventeenth edition of the *Ethnologue* divide according to their degree of endangerment. (See Table 5.)

| Level | Language Classification | Number of languages | % of total languages |
|-------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 0     | International           | 6                   | 0.1                  |
| 1     | National                | 98                  | 1.3                  |
| 2     | Provincial              | 70                  | 0.9                  |
| 3     | Wider communication     | 166                 | 2.2                  |
| 4     | Educational             | 342                 | 4.6                  |
| 5     | Developing              | 1534                | 20.5                 |
| 6a    | Vigorous                | 2503                | 33.5                 |
| 6b    | Threatened              | 1024                | 13.7                 |
| 7     | Shifting                | 456                 | 6.1                  |
| 8a    | Moribund                | 286                 | 3.8                  |
| 8b    | Nearly extinct          | 431                 | 5.8                  |
| 9     | Dormant                 | 187                 | 2.5                  |
| 10    | Extinct                 | 377                 | 5.0                  |
|       | <b>Total</b>            | <b>7480</b>         | <b>100.0</b>         |

Table 5. EGIDS classification of the world's languages

As can be seen, most of the world's languages are at Levels 5, 6a, and 6b. The EGIDS authors allowed that Krauss's 1992 prediction concerning the extinction of 50% of the world's languages was too pessimistic, because of 7103 living languages, currently 1360 or 19% are not being passed on to the next generation. However, there are some regions where language loss is much more rapid: 207 of 266 Native North American languages (78%) are at Levels 8 to 10, as are 329 of 388 Australian languages (85%). In three other regions, language loss approaches 50%: South America (48%), Polynesia (47%), and Western Asia (41%).

This analysis confirmed Fishman's conclusion that more than half of the world's languages are in stable use at least for the purposes of oral communication. In 2013, the EGIDS authors stated that 63% of the world's languages are at EGIDS Level 6a or higher (EGIDS 0-5). However, at the same time it should be noted that 32% of the world's languages are at different stages of extinction (EGIDS 6b-9) and since 1950, 5% of languages have become extinct.

Fishman's and Krauss's conclusions motivated the global linguistic community to work for the protection of endangered languages and cultures. For at least two decades now, factors connected with language stability and loss have been analyzed as part of political theory, utilizing primarily metaphorical terms (*language death* (Crystal 2000), *language destruction*, *silent languages*, and so on). Following T. Skutnabb-Kangas' and Robert Philipson's work, the term *linguistic*

**How quickly are languages disappearing?**

## Linguistic diversity index

*genocide* or *linguicide* came into broad use (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). However, factual studies were few in number. In 2010, David Harmon and Jonathan Loh of Terralingua created the *Index of Linguistic Diversity*. Comparing changes in the number of native speakers between 1970 and 2005, these researchers measured the divergence of languages from a hypothetical stable situation where the number of speakers would remain unchanged. The study included 1500 languages chosen at random from the 7299 languages included in the fifteenth edition of the *Ethnologue* (2005).

D. Harmon and J. Loh, utilizing the descriptive methods of quantitative biodiversity from ecology, designed a linguistic diversity index (Harmon, Loh 2010). Analyzing 1500 languages, they concluded that between 1970 and 2005, the total number of languages had decreased by 20% (Harmon, Loh 2010, 97). However, quantitative studies are not absolute, and are useful only as a supplement to a complex sociolinguistic analysis of a given language's situation. Language stability does not move along a downward slope. Sociolinguistic processes can also occur according to the pendulum principle, and during particular periods assimilation, language stability, or processes associated with language restoration can speed up. This is influenced by economics, political events, and a particular society's conception of priorities. The *glocalization* tendencies currently observable across the world may have a positive impact on language stability; however, influential forces are also working in the opposite direction.

**Criteria for determining language stability**

There is no single criterion by which one can describe the current state of a language and also predict its future. In recent decades, there have been several attempts to develop a system for characterizing a language's *status quo*.

In 2003, a UNESCO group of experts designed a system consisting of nine criteria: 6 criteria for establishing the vitality and endangerment of a language, 2 for characterizing linguistic attitudes, and 1 for identifying an immediate need for documentation. (See Table 6.) All of these criteria, with the exception of the total number of speakers, can be graded at different levels. The second factor – the total number of language users – is difficult to determine and its meaning is not absolute. It cannot be denied that small speech communities are more vulnerable to being physically destroyed due to aggression or a natural catastrophe, and also to being assimilated by larger speech communities.

**Factor 1. Intergenerational transmission of a language**

| Degree of Endangerment | Grade | Speakers                                                                                             |
|------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Safe                   | 5     | The language is used by all ages, from children up.                                                  |
| Unsafe                 | 4     | The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains. |
| Definitely endangered  | 3     | The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.                                       |
| Severely endangered    | 2     | The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.                                  |
| Critically endangered  | 1     | The language is mostly used by very few speakers, of the great-grandparental generation.             |
| Extinct                | 0     | There exists no speaker.                                                                             |

**Factor 3. Proportion of speakers within the total population**

| Degree of Endangerment | Grade | Proportion of speakers within the total |
|------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------|
| Safe                   | 5     | All speak the language.                 |
| Unsafe                 | 4     | Nearly all speak the language.          |
| Definitely endangered  | 3     | A majority speak the language.          |
| Severely endangered    | 2     | A minority speak the language.          |
| Critically endangered  | 1     | Very few speak the language.            |
| Extinct                | 0     | No speakers exist.                      |

**Factor 4. The use of the language with respect to sociolinguistic functions and domains**

| Degree of Endangerment | Grade | Domains and functions                                                                                                         |
|------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Universal use          | 5     | The language is used in all domains and for all functions.                                                                    |
| Multilingual parity    | 4     | Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.                                              |
| Dwindling domains      | 3     | The language is used in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains. |
| Limited domains        | 2     | The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions.                                                     |
| Highly limited domains | 1     | The language is used only in very restricted domains and for a very few functions.                                            |
| Extinct                | 0     | The language is not used in any domain and for any function.                                                                  |

**Factor 5. The use of a language in new sociolinguistic domains and the media**

| Degree of endangerment | Grade | Speakers                                        |
|------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Dynamic                | 5     | The language is used in all new domains.        |
| Robust, active         | 4     | The language is used in most new domains.       |
| Receptive              | 3     | The language is used in many domains.           |
| Coping                 | 2     | The language is used in some new domains.       |
| Minimal                | 1     | The language is used only in a few new domains. |
| Inactive               | 0     | The language is not used in any new domains.    |

**Factor 6. Materials for language acquisition and literacy**

| Grade | Accessibility of written materials                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5     | There is an established orthography, literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, and everyday media. Writing in the language is used in administration and education.                          |
| 4     | Written materials exist, and children develop literacy in the language at school. Writing in the language is not used in administration.                                                                              |
| 3     | Written materials exist and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.                                                                                      |
| 2     | Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum. |
| 1     | A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written.                                                                                                                                 |
| 0     | No orthography available to the community.                                                                                                                                                                            |

**Factor 7. Official language policy in the country**

| Degree of support      | Grade | Official attitudes toward language                                                                                     |
|------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Equal support          | 5     | All languages are protected.                                                                                           |
| Differentiated support | 4     | Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of private domains. The use of the language is prestigious. |
| Passive assimilation   | 3     | No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in the public domain.                 |
| Active assimilation    | 2     | Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.            |
| Forced assimilation    | 1     | The dominant language is the sole official language; non-dominant languages are neither recognized nor protected.      |
| Prohibition            | 0     | Minority languages are prohibited.                                                                                     |

**Factor 8. Speakers' attitudes towards their language**

| Grade | Community members' attitudes toward their language                                                         |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5     | All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.                                              |
| 4     | Most members support language maintenance.                                                                 |
| 3     | Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.       |
| 2     | Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.       |
| 1     | Only a few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss. |
| 0     | No one cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.                               |

**Factor 9. The quantity and quality of the documentation of a language**

| Nature of documentation | Grade | Language documentation                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Superlative             | 5     | There are comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, extensive texts; a constant flow of language materials. Abundant annotated high-quality audio and video recordings exist.                                                   |
| Good                    | 4     | There is one good grammar and a number of adequate grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, and occasionally updated everyday media; adequate annotated high-quality audio and video recordings.                             |
| Fair                    | 3     | There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient amount of grammars, dictionaries, and texts, but no everyday media; audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality or degree of annotation.                            |
| Fragmentary             | 2     | There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research, but they have inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation. |
| Inadequate              | 1     | Only a few grammatical sketches, short word-lists, and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.                                                    |
| Undocumented            | 0     | No material exists.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

6. tab. Criteria for determining language stability

The EGIDS and UNESCO statistics allow us to gain a nuanced understanding about the diversity of language situations, as well as knowledge of how to make strategically correct decisions for every concrete situation. Of course, the majority of international organizations – those closely connecting biological and linguistic diversity as well as those focused on preserving humanity's cultural heritage and different models of cognition – give their attention primarily to South America, Africa, Asia, and undocumented languages from other regions, as ensuring the survival of these languages depends on quickly undertaking a number of complex efforts. However, as the EGIDS authors acknowledge, “In this era of globalization, even official state languages are beginning to feel endangered by the languages of globalization” (Lewis, Simons, Fennig, 2013). For this reason, the European Union's official language situation continues to be carefully analyzed and evaluated.

### 1.3. Attitudes towards language diversity in the European Union

As Latvia has been a European Union (EU) member state since 2004, its language situation is affected not only by global, but also by regional sociolinguistic processes. The meaning of language and culture in the formation of the supranational European identity is studied and evaluated. Also, official EU institutions, observing the fundamental principle of “United in Diversity” and taking into account the relative autonomy of member states with respect to cultural, educational, and language policy, have worked out guidelines for constructing a common European identity on one hand, while maintaining the uniqueness of ethnicities on the other.

Since the 1980s, a great deal of attention has been given to questions surrounding a common European identity. In the declaration *European Identity* (1973), it is emphasized that its formation emerges through the observing of the principles of the rule of law, social justice, a common market, and human rights. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, economic and political goals have been associated with the ideas of European culture and European identity. At the same time, the popularization of the languages, histories, and traditions of the member states has also been emphasized.

The philosophical guidelines of the EU's language policy with respect to multilingualism and the possibilities for language preservation are clear: languages are to be valued, they are part of Europe's richness, the foundation of national and also European identity. The report by the European Commission (EC) entitled *A new fundamental strategy for multilingualism* (2005) points out: “Diversity is what forms the European Union as it is: this is not a blending in which uniqueness is lost, but instead a common home where diversity is celebrated and where for each of us our native language is enriching and a bridge to greater solidarity and mutual understanding. At the same time, it is acknowledged that linguistic

Language knowledge  
in the EU

diversity creates considerable problems both in terms of economics and politics. The European Union's language policy conception is not yet complete. Problems associated with the legal and actual status of languages within European Union institutions still are to be resolved" (Krzyżanowsky, Wodak 2011a, 2011b).

Currently, there are approximately 500 million people living in the 28 member states of the European Union, 3 alphabets are used for its 24 official languages and approximately 80 minority languages (not counting migrant languages). Though according to the Treaty of Rome (1957) and its newer versions, all languages are equal, the number of speakers has a large impact on securing a language's competitiveness. In this respect, there are considerable differences among languages. Five languages appear to be clearly dominant: German (72 million), English (54 million), French (56 million), Italian (51 million), and Spanish (39 million). In terms of the number of speakers, Polish (32 million) and Romanian (18 million) are also competitive. Czech (9 million) and Hungarian (8 million) also have a relatively large number of speakers (though statistics regarding the total number of speakers differ noticeably between sources). If one takes into account the spread of English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese across the world, the competition is even more uneven – including for Latvian, with its approximately 2 million speakers. Outside of the "big 5", there seems to exist no considerable use or tradition of language learning, even in the case of neighboring countries using each other's languages.

How many languages are  
there in the EU?

However, as opposed to the often-heard view, even knowledge of these "big 5" languages is not that widespread. As shown by the 2012 Eurobarometer study, only 54% of Europeans are able to communicate in at least one language beyond their own native language, only 25% in two other languages, and 10% in three or more languages (See Figure 1.). The most widespread second languages are English (38%), French (12%), German (11%), Spanish (7%), and Italian (3%). In terms of its level of multilingualism, Latvia is in the second highest position in the European Union; however, this comes not only as a result of the relatively high level of English language knowledge (46% of residents), but also due to peculiarities in the methodology of the study itself: with 64% of residents declaring Russian and 24% of residents declaring Latvian as examples of their knowledge of a foreign language (Eurobarometer 2012).

The meaning of linguistic  
diversity in the EU

During certain periods, particular questions (for example, the linguistic rights of minorities, the development of translations and terminology, migrant and diaspora languages, and so on) have come to the forefront. In order to guarantee in practice the multilingualism of every EU citizen, since 2001 – the European Year of Language – special attention has been given to language acquisition, especially language acquisition within the educational system. The European Commission's *Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity. An action plan 2004-06* clearly states that member states are responsible for the preservation of language diversity, for guaranteeing opportunities for language acquisition, and for popularizing their languages in other countries, especially in neighboring countries.

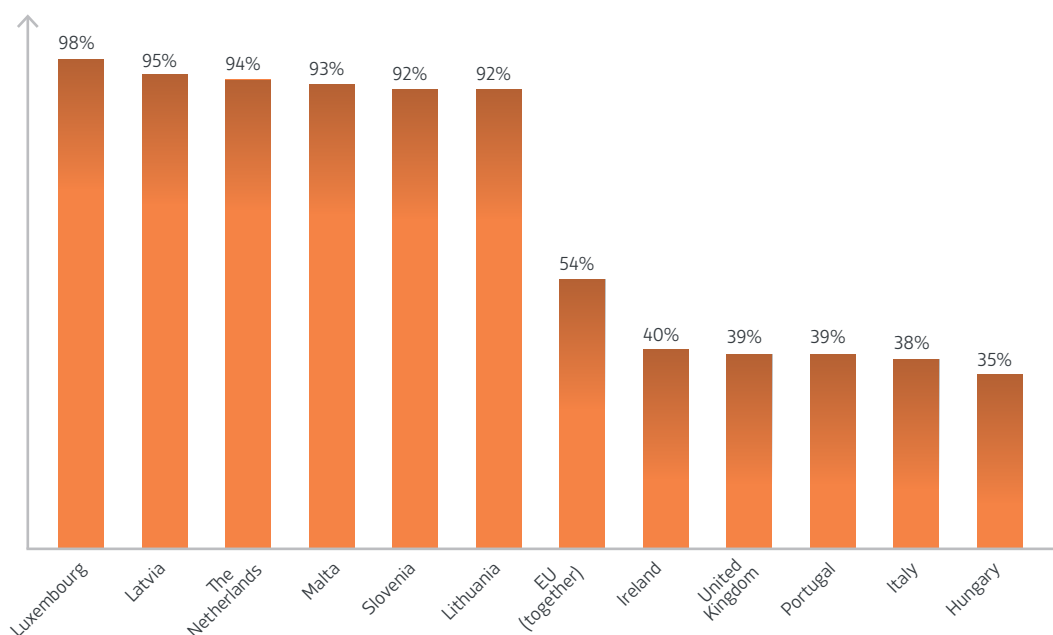


Figure 1. Foreign language knowledge in the European Union – residents (%) who can speak at least one foreign language. Statistics: Eurobarometer 2012.

In countries with minority communities, acquisition of the state language must be guaranteed in order to help these minorities integrate into these societies. However, knowledge of only English as a second language has quickly increased, while efforts to promote increased learning of other languages have not shown much in the way of results. Questions of language (both at the level of EU institutions and at the level of a common approach among member states) are currently not being raised to any great extent.

In the newest EU document relating to languages – the conclusions of the Council of education ministers regarding multilingualism and the development of language proficiency approved in 2014 (Conclusions 2014) – it is emphasized that the Erasmus+ mobility program only ensures online learning of 6 languages (the “big 5” plus Dutch), but this approach needs to be incrementally developed for all EU languages. It is emphasized that the learning of official languages by migrants must be ensured, while the integrating role that language has is not especially emphasized.

A certain decrease in interest concerning languages is also demonstrated by the fact that the European Commission no longer has a multilingualism commissioner, nor is multilingualism, as was previously the case, mentioned as part of any other commissioner’s portfolio. This has understandably caused alarm among European-level professional and non-governmental organizations (Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity, European Federation of National Institutions for Language, and others) as well as in particular member states. A number of countries (for example, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia) have adopted special language policy programs. The prognoses for the further development of language policy at EU level are contradictory; Latvian academics and politicians also have the ability to influence these processes through work at international institutions, as well as by enacting and popularizing the program *Guidelines for State Language Policy*

2015-2020 (*Valsts valodas politikas pamatnostādnes 2015.–2020. gadam*) adopted at the end of 2014. However, one must acknowledge that official language status within the EU is significant for Latvian in light of its fierce competition with other languages on the global, regional, and national levels.

### 1.4. Latvian language vitality: observations and predictions

As a result of globalization processes connected with economics and politics, an all-encompassing process of internationalization is underway. Rapid developments in the international economy, trade, and tourism have resulted in a simplification of formalities for crossing borders. At the same time, considerable differences in living standards between different countries, wars, international conflicts, ecological catastrophes and the need for effective work force development programs have resulted in the movement of large groups of refugees and economic migrants. The linguistic environment is set to undergo inevitable changes.

Is it possible to objectively evaluate any language's *status quo* and its future prospects? Taking into account the changing world and the unforeseeable effect of various factors (which also include society's opinions), geolinguists, sociolinguists, and even futurologists are fairly reserved when it comes to making any predictions. However, based in large part on the aforementioned statistics gathered by the *Ethnologue*, we will list some facts and considerations with regard to how the position of Latvian is to be understood with respect to global linguistic diversity.

The precise **number of Latvian speakers** cannot be defined, as it does not coincide with Latvia's total population. Additionally, there is incomplete information regarding the number of speakers for whom Latvian is a native language outside of Latvia's borders, and also the number of speakers for whom Latvian is a second language (approximately 90% of the ethnic minority community in Latvia claim knowledge of Latvian); however, approximate statistics are available. As of June 2015, the population of Latvia is 1,979,400 (<http://www.csb.gov.lv/statistikas-temas/iedzivotaji-galvenie-raditaji-30260.html>) and it is estimated that approximately 370,000 Latvians live outside of Latvia (<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/tautiesiem-arzemes/latvijas-diaspora-pasaule>).

Therefore, Latvian is spoken by at least 2 million people. According to the *Ethnologue*, there are only 394 languages, or 6.8% of the total 7102 living languages in the world today, which are spoken by more than 1 million people. This means that through its total number of speakers, Latvian finds itself in the top two hundred languages in this list, which is an excellent indicator. Languages spoken by more than one million people are mostly classified as part of the *completely* or *totally safe* language group. However, it must be noted that Latvian competes with at least 2 of the 6 global mega-languages (Russian and English), therefore, its total number of speakers is only one factor to be taken into account when judging its competitiveness.

How many speakers does  
Latvian have?

The position of Latvian  
according to EGIDS and  
UNESCO

According to the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), Latvian can be classified as a Level 1 state language and, therefore, as a language which is not endangered. Aside from the 6 internationally significant languages classified as Level 0 (0.1% of the total number of languages), this status is only given to 98 languages (1.3% of the total number of languages).

According to the UNESCO criteria for determining language stability, the position of Latvian would be evaluated as follows (See Table 6 for descriptions of each factor):

| Factor | Grade  | Comments                                                                                                         |
|--------|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | 5      | Not endangered, the language is used by all generations.                                                         |
| 2      | –      | Not endangered, the number of speakers is greater than 1 million.                                                |
| 3      | 4 to 5 | Possibly endangered, as the language is not used by all residents.                                               |
| 4      | 4–5    | The language is used in all domains; in some domains this is in parallel with other languages.                   |
| 5      | 5      | Dynamic – the language is used in all new domains; in some new domains this is in parallel with other languages. |
| 6      | 5      | A stable tradition and prevalence of literacy.                                                                   |
| 7      | 5      | State language status; detailed linguistic legislation.                                                          |
| 8      | 4      | The majority of speakers support the maintaining of the language.                                                |
| 9      | 5      | Extensive and varied dictionaries and grammars.                                                                  |

Table 7. Factors relating to the stability of Latvian

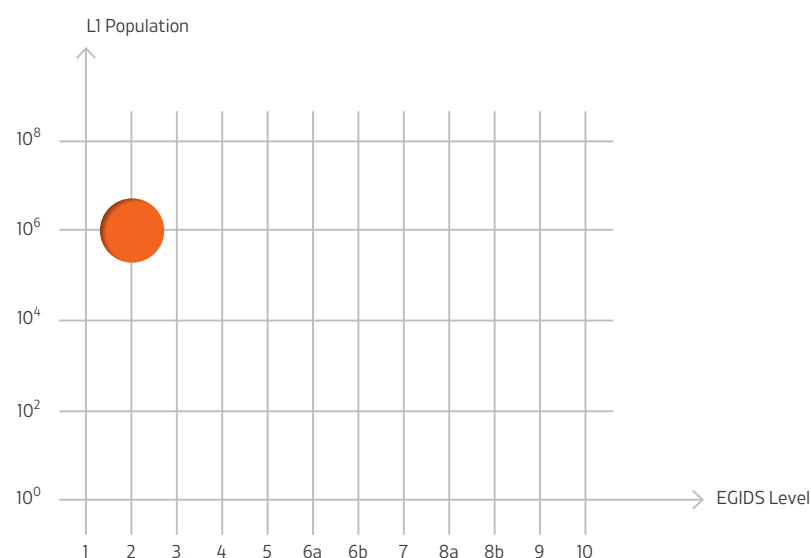


Figure 2. Latvian on the EGIDS scale. Source: <http://www.ethnologue.com/cloud/lvs>

**The collective  
ethno-linguistic vitality  
of Latvian**

Therefore, according to the EGIDS scale, Latvian is in a competitive position as a Level 1 language. Most languages are at Levels 5, 6a, or 6b. Figure 2 shows the position of Latvian compared to other languages.

The collective ethnolinguistic vitality of Latvian can be evaluated as high, taking into account demographic factors, institutional support, and its status relative to other languages used within the same territory (See the indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality described previously in Table 3.).

However, from a linguistic perspective certain problems can be seen. Public rhetoric is traditionally characterized by a “hot” attitude, but in everyday life there is evidence at every turn of a “cool” attitude. As noted by the President of Latvia’s Constitutional Rights Commission, “the overarching principle of the national state demands not only the securing of the status of the state language for Latvian (Satversme [Latvian Constitution], Article 4), but also the use of all legal means available to the government to ensure that Latvian can in practice fulfill its functions as the state language, that is, to be the common language for communication within society and the language of democratic participation” (Viedoklis 2012: 134, Points 318-319). The symbolic meaning of Latvian as part of the identity of the Latvian state is not openly doubted in most cases. But in practice, words and ideals may not always coincide with actions and reality in terms of linguistic attitudes or actual linguistic behavior.

There exist regulations in Latvia that secure the legal rights pertaining to the use of Latvian in its role as the state language, and now a second language policy document outlining the relevant programs has also been adopted (*Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015-2020*). However, legal means are only sufficient to influence the use of a language in areas affected by government regulation; as indicated in Section 2(3) of the State Language Law, “this law does not apply to language use among Latvia’s residents in non-official contexts,” and this norm is traditionally interpreted as broadly as possible. Not only is doubt cast on the status of Latvian, but also on its monopoly in socially significant domains (government, mass media, communications by government officials). For these reasons it must be noted that specifically subjective factors, i.e., linguistic attitudes, do not allow for the ethnolinguistic vitality of Latvian to be recognized as adequate in this language competition situation.

**Conclusions****The competitiveness  
of Latvian**

As can be seen, the objective position of Latvian is very good with respect to global linguistic diversity. There is no reason to call Latvians a small nation or to refer to Latvian as a “small” language. Based on its total number of speakers, Latvian is among the world’s 200 “largest” languages. The competitiveness of Latvian is also strengthened by its position in the institutions of national and local government, the armed forces, and the educational system, including higher education, as well as the ever-increasing number of individuals who speak Latvian as their second language and the proportion of such speakers among the ethnic

minority population in Latvia. Its status as an official language within the European Union functions as a meaningful stimulus for the continued development of Latvian language terminology as well as of the standardized form of Latvian (the literary language), which is extremely important for its long-term viability. The constitutional status of Latvian, the State Language Law, and the regulations for its implementation have secured the necessary legal framework ensuring the use and development of Latvian (Druviete, Kārklīņa u. c. 2014).

However, to understand Latvia's ethnodemographic and geopolitical situation it is not sufficient to only look at statistical data and legal acts, because these give an incomplete impression of the actual competitiveness of Latvian or its future prospects for development. Objectively measurable and describable parameters regarding the language situation must be analyzed in a wider historical and international context and in close connection with the linguistic attitudes of the speech community as derived from qualitative studies. This attitude, in turn, depends not only on narratives which have taken hold over the course of generations, and which in Latvia often are characterized by a sense of endangerment and fatalism, but also on society's knowledge of languages and their competition with each other in Latvia, as well as in the world in general. The studies conducted by the Latvian Language Agency (especially *Valodas situācija 2011* [The Language Situation 2011]) and also this, the newest version of this study, reflect the dynamics of the language situation with facts, not with assumptions. We have a clear plan – the *Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015-2020* (2014) – in which the necessary financial support from the government is provided for maintaining sociolinguistic functions. In evaluating the present and future of Latvian there is room neither for carefree aloofness, nor for demoralizing pessimism; instead, what is required is focused and coordinated cooperation between government institutions, community organizations, and society at large. These efforts combined should strengthen factors in favor of the development of Latvian and prevent or minimize those factors which are unfavorable to reaching these goals.





# **LANGUAGES IN LATVIA: LATVIAN AS THE STATE LANGUAGE, LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION**

(Kerttu Kibbermann, Gunta Kļava)

Statistics used  
in this study

The implementation of Latvian language policy has three main aspects: legal, pedagogical, and linguistic, i.e., securing the implementation of state language policy through legislation, the area of Latvian (i.e., state<sup>1</sup>) language acquisition encompassing both its theoretical and practical aspects, and all manner of research into the language itself. In this way, the function of Latvian in its role as the state language is ensured. The basis and fundamental principles for implementing Latvia's language policy are described in the new *Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015-2020* and also detailed more precisely in the extensive study published by the Latvian Language Agency in 2011 on the language situation in Latvia between 2004 and 2010 (*Valodas situācija 2011*, 16–21). It is fundamental for effective implementation of language policy for there to be a coordinated approach in all three of the aforementioned aspects. Positive results in implementing any language policy are linked to a close interaction between these aspects. In addition, the implementation of language policy is up to not only government institutions representing their respective fields, but to all of society. For example, an increase in language use is not possible without a quantitative and qualitative increase in language proficiency or without ensuring a positive linguistic attitude; at the same time, an increase in language proficiency is not imaginable without the necessary pedagogical resources, and so on. An evaluation of the language situation must focus especially on the actual fundamental elements of state language status – language ability, language use, and attitudes towards the language.

The analysis of the language situation (2010-2015) utilizes data<sup>2</sup> from a number of quantitative and qualitative surveys as well as other studies concerning the implementation of different aspects of language policy.

This study is based on data from the following quantitative surveys:

- *Valodas situācijas sociolingvistiskā izpēte. Kvantitatīvā pētījuma rezultātu ziņojums.* [A sociolinguistic study of the language situation. A report of the results of this quantitative study.] Contracting authority: Latvian Language Agency (Latviešu valodas aģentūra – LVA). Survey conducted by: SIA Aptauju aģentūra, 2012 (henceforth: 2012 LVA Survey);
- *Valodas situācijas sociolingvistiskā izpēte. Kvantitatīvā pētījuma rezultātu ziņojums.* [A sociolinguistic study of the language situation. A report of the results of this quantitative study.] Contracting authority: LVA. Survey conducted by: SIA Excolo Latvia, 2014 (henceforth: 2014 LVA Survey);
- Tautas skaitīšana. [National Census.] Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2011. Available at: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/statistikas-temas/tautas-skaitisana-28290.html> [Accessed: 14.11.2014.];

<sup>1</sup> In the original Latvian version of this text, Latvian, with respect to language policy, is generally referred to as “valsts valoda” – the state language. In this translated version, the choice was made to refer to Latvian as “Latvian” rather than “the state language” when talking about proficiency or use of the language (i.e., “Latvian language proficiency”, “Latvian language use” instead of “state language proficiency”, “state language use”).

<sup>2</sup> References to data sources used are given next to the figure or text.

- *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas: nacionālā identitāte, transnacionālās attiecības un diasporas politika*. [The emigrée communities of Latvia: national identity, transnational relations, politics of the diaspora] LU FSI, 2015.

The study also utilized data from other sources and studies, for example:

- *Latviešu valodas attīstības un lietojuma problēmas*. [Problems in the development and use of Latvian.] Contracting authority: VVA. Survey conducted by: Data Serviss, 2004;
- *Latvijas valodas situācijas sociolingvistiskā izpēte*. [A sociolinguistic study of the language situation in Latvia.] Contracting authority: LVA. Survey conducted by: Data Serviss, 2009 (henceforth: 2009 LVA Survey);
- *Piederības sajūta Latvijai*. [A sense of belonging to Latvia.] Sabiedriskās domas pētījumu centrs "SKDS". Rīga, 2014 (henceforth: SKDS 2014);
- *Valodas ideoloģija un plašsaziņas līdzekļi: televīzija*. Sociolingvistisks pētījums. [Language ideology and mass media: television. A sociolinguistic study.] K. Kibermane, G. Kļava, L. Lauze, K. Tihomirova. Rīga: Latviešu valodas aģentūra, 2015;
- *Valsts valodas prasmes pārbaude Latvijā: rezultāti un to analīze (2009–2012)*. Pētījums. [An examination of state [i.e., Latvian] language proficiency in Latvia: the results and their analysis (2009–2012).] V. Ernstsone, A. Lazareva, B. Mūrniece-Buļeva. Rīga: Latviešu valodas aģentūra, 2013. Available at: [http://valoda.lv/downloadDoc\\_903/mid\\_509](http://valoda.lv/downloadDoc_903/mid_509). [Accessed: 15.07.2015.]

## 2.1. Directions for the implementation of language policy

The main policy planning document in force during the period discussed in this study focusing on the implementation of state language policy was *Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015–2020*. This document describes the main directions of work to ensure full the functionality of Latvian as the state language. Based on the goal of state language policy, i.e., ensuring the long-term viability of Latvian and its linguistic competitiveness in the marketplace of languages within Latvia and around the world, the following directions for implementing language policy are defined in this document:

- A legal foundation for state language status;
- Ensuring proficiency in the national (i.e., Latvian) language by promoting the necessity of Latvian language proficiency, continuing the improvement of Latvian language as a medium of education, promoting Latvian language acquisition among members of the diaspora (i.e., the Latvian emigrant community abroad);

State language policy guidelines

- Ensuring scientific study of and research into Latvian;
- Ensuring the participation of society in implementing state language policy;
- Ensuring the presence of Latvian in literature and the arts.

The position of Latvian in the world, as evaluated based on various socio-linguistic criteria (see Chapter 1 of this volume.), is well-established and stable. However, taking into account the intense competition which exists among languages in today's world due to economic value as well as changes in society's linguistic views, one cannot depend on the ability of the Latvian language to meet these challenges alone in these circumstances. Instead, Latvian requires institutional support as well as the support of every speaker.

In our present-day globalized society, the work needed to protect a language, cultivate it, and ensure its long-term survival is not simple. This work is subject to various linguistic and extralinguistic factors (Figure 3), which are difficult to predict and can alter a given language's circumstances, but to which language policy must react fairly quickly. One of the most prominent examples is an issue which came to the fore in 2015 – ensuring language acquisition for refugees in circumstances where a solution needed to be found over a short period of time. Any event that occurs in a speech community causes a specific reaction and linguistic behavior. In the best circumstances this is helpful in the work of language development, but often it has the exact opposite effect.

The connection between  
state language policy and  
other domains

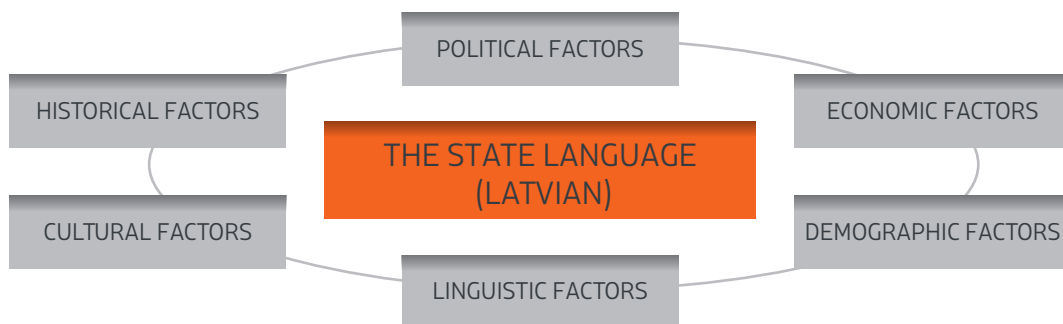


Figure 3. Factors influencing the situation of a language. Image taken from *Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015-2020* (pg. 9)

Language: the property of  
every speaker

One of the most prominent examples demonstrating the impact of various factors on language development is the situation following Latvia's accession to the European Union, when the need for Latvian terminology in various domains quickly increased, in this way also advancing the development of Latvian and the relevant branches of linguistics (Valodas situācija 2011, 25). Likewise, language development and long-term survival is also impacted by seemingly less significant circumstances, which can become in general a substantially positive or, conversely, a negative source for change. As emphasized by I. Druviete (Druviete 2011b), there is nothing insignificant in language or language policy – every

individual or collective choice to speak or not to speak in Latvian on television, to write or not to write correct grammatical endings for last names, to use or not to use feminine forms for last names can create and indeed does create significant changes not only in the language situation and in language use, but also in the language system itself. Questions pertaining to Latvian – its quality as well as its use – have always been significant to society. Expressing an opinion in public about how bad the situation is for Latvian continues to spread the myth of the endangerment of Latvian. On the other hand, this belief, inherited over generations, concerning ever-present threats to Latvian does result in society at large thinking and talking about Latvian. It is specifically language myths and preconceived notions that have a large effect on language policy and its implementation – these influence a society's view of its language, its view of other languages (and their speakers), and its views on the rights of speakers of other languages; this can create challenges for language policy that the government implements (Schiffmann 2004, 67).

State language policy is a unique and sensitive area, which “takes into account its [language's] meaning as a national symbol and a fundamental element of national identity and also considers that the existence, development, and long-term survival of a language are directly dependent on its speakers as well as [other] factors, which, acting together, can significantly influence intended results of a policy” (Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015-2020). In planning language policy implementation directions, all factors are taken into account. These are grounded in the historical, social, cultural, traditional, and other circumstances of a particular society and country. These circumstances differ from country to country. For this reason, using one uniform “recipe” for achieving specific language policy goals does not work (Schiffmann 2004, 280). Events in Latvia and its language policy between 2010 and 2015 (as examples, one can list just the more widely discussed events: the referendum on recognizing Russian as a second state language in Latvia, the question concerning the requirement of members of parliament to have Latvian language proficiency, the use of Latvian in the mass media, the situation in the context of global migration, including the possibilities for integrating refugees, and so on) have influenced the language situation as well as the directions in which action is to be taken with respect to working out language policy; the work of language institutions has also been influenced here, especially legal and pedagogical aspects.

**Factors influencing  
the implementation  
of language policy**

## **2.2. The language situation of Latvia from an ethnodemographic perspective**

The population of permanent residents in Latvia continues to decrease with each year. At the beginning of the period observed for this study, on January 1,

**The number of permanent  
residents in Latvia**

2010, Latvia had 2,120,504 inhabitants; at the end of this period, January 1, 2015, it had approximately 1,986,096 inhabitants. This means that Latvia's population decreased by 6.3% during this period (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde [Central Bureau of Statistics] (CSP) statistics, Figure 4).

This decrease in Latvia's population is the result of a negative birth rate as well as emigration. The death rate continues to exceed the birth rate each year in Latvia. The natural increase in population was -10,259 in 2010, -9715 in 2011, -9128 in 2012, -8095 in 2013, and -6720 in 2014 (CSP statistics).

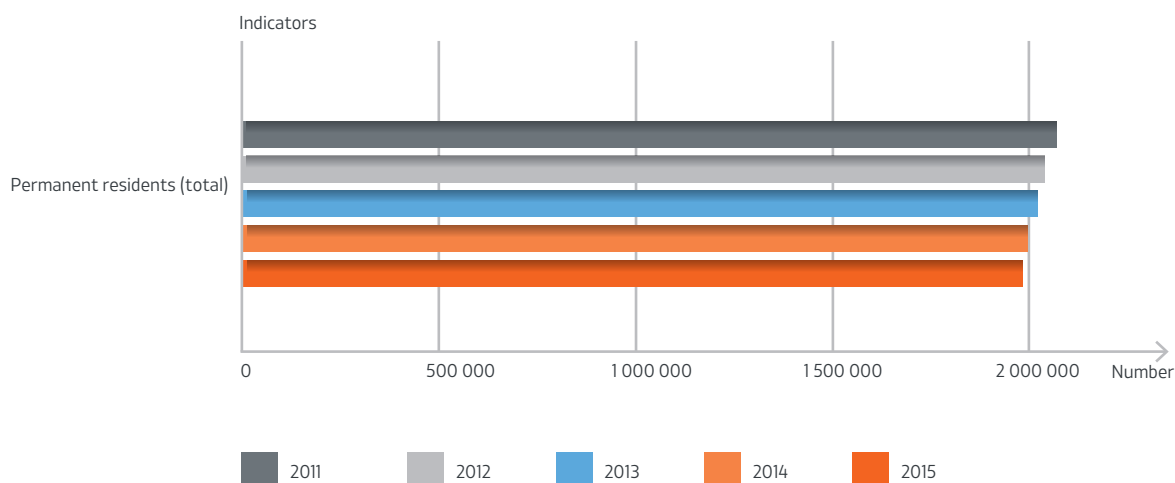


Figure 4. The number of permanent residents between 2010-2015 (at the start of each year). Statistics: CSP

## The Ethnic Composition of Latvia's population

The 2011 Latvian National Census shows that there are members of more than 160 nationalities living in Latvia. As of January 1, 2015, 61.6% of Latvia's residents are Latvian, while 38.4% are members of other ethnicities (Figure 5). While the number of Latvians (as well as the number of individuals of other ethnicities) decreases with each year, the proportion of Latvians living in Latvia is slowly increasing. The proportion of Latvians as part of the total population of Latvia has increased by 1.1% since 2011. Regardless of these changes, Latvians constitute the smallest proportion of any titular nationality of an EU country. The total number and proportion of other ethnicities living in Latvia continues to slowly decrease. The most rapid decrease during this period was among residents of Russian ethnicity; their proportion of the total population decreased from 26.8% in 2011 to 25.8% in 2015 (Table 8).

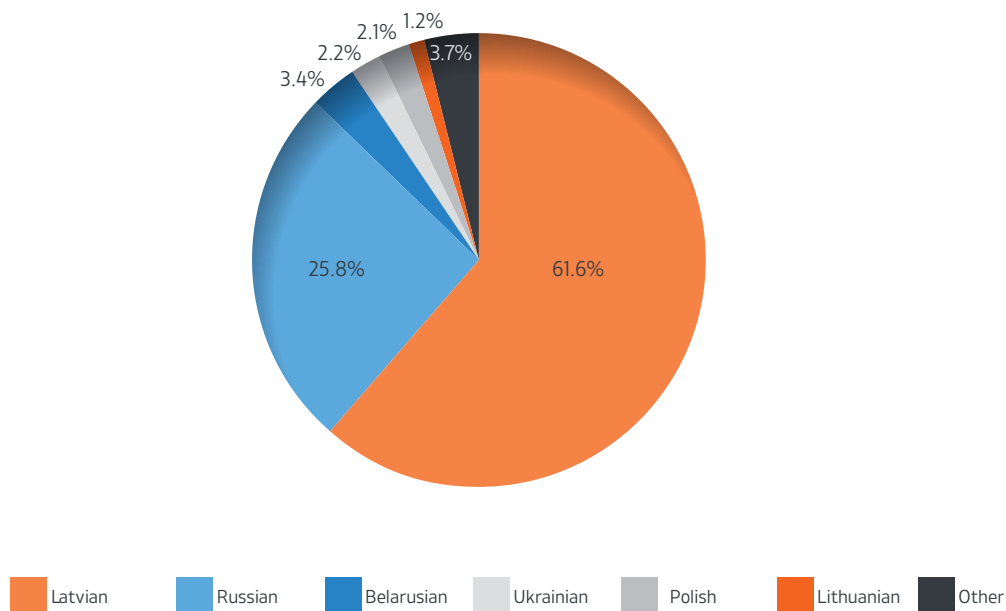


Figure 5. The ethnic composition of Latvia's permanent residents in 2015. Statistics: CSP.

|                                                                | 2011      | %     | 2015      | %     |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Total                                                          | 2 074 605 | 100%  | 1 986 096 | 100%  |       |
| Latvian                                                        | 1 255 785 | 60.5% | 1 223 650 | 61.6% | +1.1% |
| Russian                                                        | 556 434   | 26.8% | 512 400   | 25.8% | -1%   |
| Belarusian                                                     | 73 781    | 3.6%  | 67 318    | 3.4%  | -0.2% |
| Ukrainian                                                      | 49 134    | 2.4%  | 44 709    | 2.2%  | -0.2% |
| Polish                                                         | 47 201    | 2.3%  | 42 466    | 2.1%  | -0.2% |
| Lithuanian                                                     | 26 924    | 1.3%  | 24 485    | 1.2%  | -0.1% |
| Jewish                                                         | 6 495     | 0.3%  | 5 185     | 0.3%  |       |
| Roma                                                           | 6 643     | 0.3%  | 5 388     | 0.3%  |       |
| German                                                         | 3 127     | 0.2%  | 2 886     | 0.2%  |       |
| Estonian                                                       | 2 085     | 0.1%  | 1 839     | 0.1%  |       |
| Other ethnicities including those not indicating any ethnicity | 46 996    | 2.2%  | 55 671    | 2.8%  | +0.4% |

Table 8. Changes in the ethnic composition of Latvia's permanent residents between 2011 and 2015. Statistics: CSP.

**The ethnic composition  
of Latvia's residents  
by region**

The largest proportion of Latvians is found in the Vidzeme region (in 2015, 86.5% of residents were Latvian) and the Kurzeme region (76.2% Latvian). Conversely, less than half of the residents consider themselves to be Latvian in the Latgale region (45.5% Latvian) and the Rīga region (45.9% Latvian). These regions have large populations of Russians (in 2015, the Rīga region was 38% Russian, and the Latgale region was 37.3% Russian). The population is decreasing in all regions. In all of Latvia, the proportion of Latvians is incrementally increasing among residents. For example, in 1989, 36.5% of the residents of Rīga were Latvian, by 2000 the Latvian proportion in Rīga had increased to 41%, and by 2015 this proportion had increased to 45.9%. The Russian proportion of the population of Rīga has decreased from 47.3% in 1989 to 43.9% in 2000 and further to 38% in 2015 (Table 9).

|                | Latvian                  | Russian     | Belarusian | Ukrainian  | Polish     | Lithuanian | Roma       | Other ethnicities <sup>3</sup> |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| Rīga region    | 45.9 / +1.2 <sup>4</sup> | 38.0 / -1.4 | 3.9 / -0.2 | 3.5 / -0.2 | 1.9 / -0.1 | 0.8 / -0.1 | 0.1 / 0    | 5.9 / +0.8                     |
| Pierīga region | 71.8 / +0.9              | 18.6 / -0.9 | 2.7 / -0.2 | 1.8 / -0.1 | 1.3 / 0    | 0.8 / 0    | 0.3 / 0    | 2.7 / +0.3                     |
| Vidzeme region | 86.5 / +0.9              | 9.0 / -0.7  | 1.3 / -0.1 | 0.8 / -0.1 | 0.8 / 0    | 0.4 / 0    | 0.2 / 0    | 1.0 / 0                        |
| Kurzeme region | 76.2 / +1.3              | 14.2 / -0.7 | 2.0 / -0.1 | 2.5 / -0.1 | 0.7 / -0.1 | 2.7 / -0.2 | 0.5 / -0.1 | 1.2 / 0                        |
| Zemgale region | 70.6 / +1.4              | 17.2 / -0.8 | 3.9 / -0.2 | 1.7 / -0.2 | 1.7 / -0.1 | 2.9 / -0.2 | 0.4 / -0.1 | 1.6 / +0.2                     |
| Latgale region | 45.5 / +0.9              | 37.3 / -1   | 5.2 / -0.2 | 1.3 / -0.1 | 6.6 / -0.3 | 0.6 / 0    | 0.4 / 0    | 3.1 / +0.7                     |

Table 9. The ethnic composition of permanent residents by region in 2015 (compared with 2011);%. Statistics: CSP.

**The ethnic composition  
of Latvia's residents  
by age group**

The results of the 2011 census showed that the ethnicity of permanent residents of working age differed greatly between age groups (Figure 6). The younger the generation, the more individuals there were who considered themselves Latvian and the fewer there were identifying as members of minority ethnicities, for example, as Russian or Belarusian. While only half of individuals ages 55 to 64 considered themselves to be Latvian, 70.6% of individuals aged 15 to 24 identified as Latvian. Among individuals ages 55 to 64, approximately one third considered themselves to be Russian, while only about one fifth of individuals aged 15 to 24 identified as Russian.

<sup>3</sup> Including no ethnicity indicated.

<sup>4</sup> Compared with 2011.

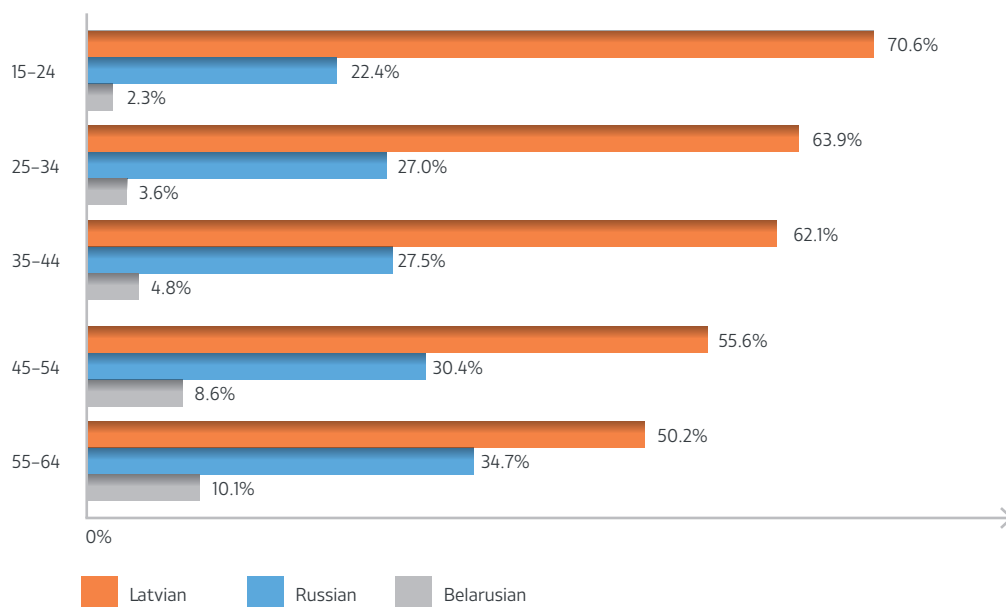


Figure 6. Permanent residents of working age in Latvia in 2011, by ethnicity (divided by age group).  
Statistics: 2011 Latvian National Census.

### Emigration and immigration

Emigration from Latvia, according to official statistics, is still considerable, but decreased during the period examined by this study (Figure 7). In 2010, 39,651 residents emigrated from Latvia, in 2011 this figure was 30,311, in 2012 – 25,163, in 2013 – 22,561, and in 2014 – 19,017. Though emigration has decreased in recent years, before 2008 the rate of emigration was decidedly lower. As a large proportion of emigrants do not register their departure and remain registered as living in Latvia, these individuals continue to be considered residents of Latvia in CSP statistics. From 2010 until 2014, the largest number of people emigrating from Latvia went to ES-15<sup>5</sup> countries (every year approximately 70-80% of emigrants left for these countries) (CSP statistics).

In earlier periods, the largest number of immigrants came to Latvia from countries outside of the EU, for example from countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); however, between 2010 and 2014, the largest number of immigrants came from other EU member states (55.6%, primarily from ES-15 countries). Only one third of immigrants came from CIS countries. It should also be noted that during the period examined by this study, the number of immigrants to Latvia has increased several times (in 2010 this was 4011 individuals, in 2011 it was 10,234 individuals, in 2012 – 13,303, in 2013 – 8299, in 2014 – 10,365). The previous time as many immigrants to Latvia were registered as in 2012 was in 1991 (14,684 individuals) (CSP Statistics).

Immigrant countries  
of origin

<sup>5</sup> Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

### New trends

The total number of foreigners living in Latvia with a permanent or temporary residence permit between 2009 and 2015 increased from 49,871 to 84,037 individuals (Kļave, Šūpule, Zepa 2015, 2), i.e., 4.2% of the total population. The number of asylum seekers in Latvia is still fairly small, although this number increases slightly with each year. In addition, in 2015 Latvia began accepting asylum seekers as part of the European program for migration; however, the number – 531 asylum seekers in two years – will not significantly affect statistical indicators (for information see the Ministry of Interior homepage: [http://www.iem.gov.lv/lat/patveruma\\_mekletaji\\_es\\_un\\_latvija/files/text/Atbildes.pdf](http://www.iem.gov.lv/lat/patveruma_mekletaji_es_un_latvija/files/text/Atbildes.pdf)). This fact is significant in another respect, i.e., with regard to language acquisition and integration given the prior educational experience as well as cultural and social differences of these individuals. From 2010 until August 31, 2015, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (Pilsonības un migrāciju lietu pārvalde – PMLP) received 1335 applications for asylum. Of these applications, international protection status (refugee or alternative status) was granted to 155 individuals (PMLP 2015). Up until now, the largest number of asylum applications was received in 2014, when 364 individuals requested asylum in Latvia, primarily from Georgia (166), Ukraine (75), Syria (34), and Iraq (21).

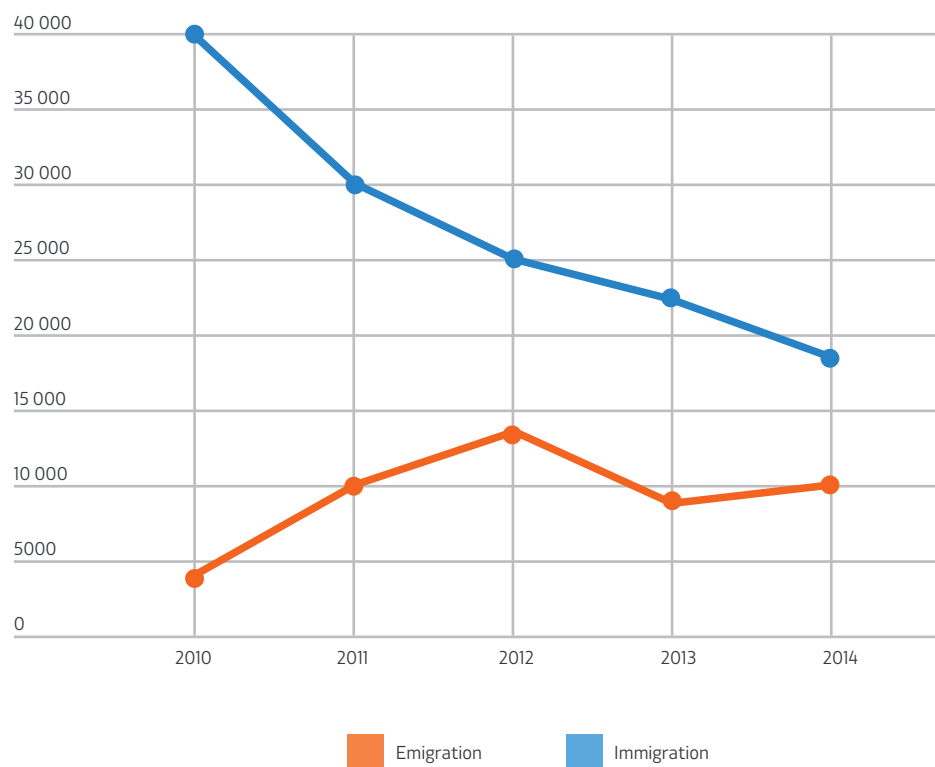


Figure 7. Emigration and immigration in Latvia between 2010 and 2015. Statistics: CSP.

Despite the increase in immigration, Latvia's migration balance still remains negative (-35,640 in 2010, -20,077 in 2011, -11,860 in 2012, -14,262 in 2013, and -8652 in 2014).

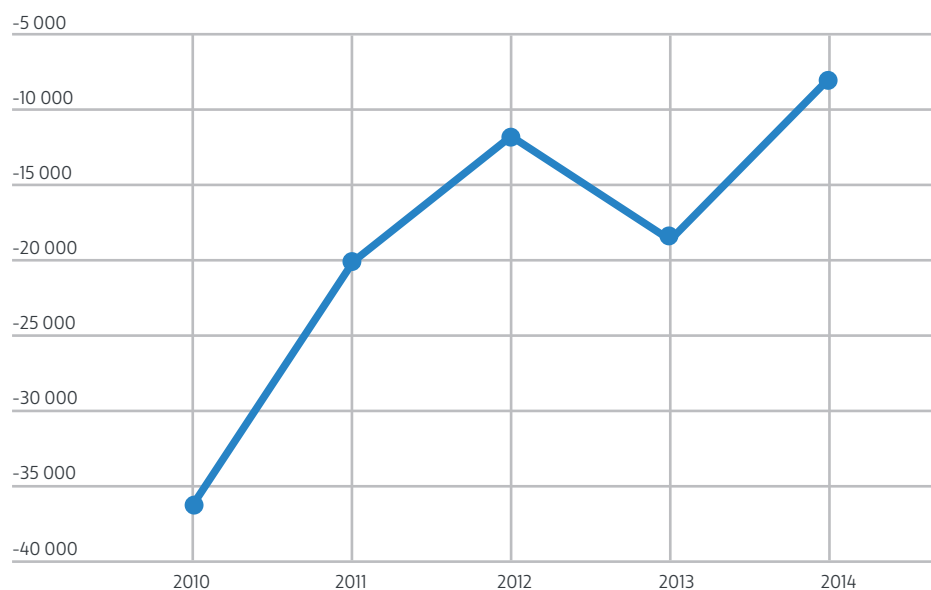


Figure 8. Latvia's migration balance between 2010 and 2015. Statistics: CSP.

### The effect of ethnodemographic factors on the Latvian language situation

The Latvian language situation is characterized by the aforementioned general ethnodemographic statistics concerning Latvia's residents. Ethnicity and native language generally coincide among Latvia's residents; Latvian and Russian ethnic origin also coincides with ethnic self-identification, though differences can be seen among members of other ethnicities (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*, 51). In terms of ethnicity (and therefore also language), the Latgale and Rīga regions are unique in that members of ethnic minorities form the majority of the population and a little less than half of the residents of these regions consider themselves to be Latvian. Though every year the proportion of Latvians increases within the territory of Latvia – and this could be considered a positive trend in terms of the increase of Latvian language use – the actual number of Latvians in Latvia decreases with each year as a result of negative natural growth and emigration. Therefore, it cannot be said that the environment in which Latvian is used is expanding. However, in comparison with other languages across the world, the Latvian language situation is good; in terms of number of speakers, it is one of the largest world languages (in 150<sup>th</sup>-200<sup>th</sup> place among approximately 7000 languages; for more see Chapter 1) as well as one of the world's 100 (official) state languages.

**Topical issues in the  
language situation of  
the Latvian diaspora  
community**

Along with the growth of the Latvian diaspora community abroad, recent years have seen a considerable increase in the number of Latvian speakers living outside of Latvia. According to the calculations of researcher M. Goldmanis, of the University of Latvia's Philosophy and Sociology Institute, there are approximately 365,000 Latvian nationals living abroad, with the largest Latvian diaspora communities living in the United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, and the United States (Mieriņa, Koroļeva 2015, 31). It is clear that while living abroad, the use of Latvian among Latvians decreases and narrows functionally. Though a large part (63%) of emigrants feel more connected to Latvia than to the country in which they are currently living, the majority of Latvian nationals are not planning on returning to Latvia (approximately 30% think that they will never return and 40% think that they would return only under specific circumstances). It is a positive sign that many (70%) consider it important that their children living outside of Latvia have full mastery of Latvian; in addition, 25% consider it to be sufficient for their children to have conversational ability in Latvian (Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015). In order for children living abroad to have full mastery of Latvian, it is insufficient for Latvian to be spoken at home and with friends; these children would also need to use Latvian in other sociolinguistics domains; for example, at school. While in recent years the diaspora communities have been offered various forms of support in maintaining Latvian language and culture, the use of Latvian is significantly decreasing and the proficiency of these children in the language of their current home country is superior to their proficiency in Latvian (Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015; for more see Chapter 4).

**Refugees and asylum  
seekers in Latvia**

In the future, it can be expected that the language situation will also become more diverse because of an increase in the number of immigrants. Latvia is becoming increasingly attractive to citizens of other countries – to voluntary as well as involuntary immigrants. Up until now, foreigners had mostly come to Latvia voluntarily – for family or work reasons – but since 2010, they have also come due to changes in the Immigration Law regarding the opportunity to purchase real estate in Latvia (Providus 2014; Kļāve, Šūpule, Zepa 2015, 34).

As mentioned earlier, the number of asylum seekers among immigrants to Latvia has been very small. However, along with the rapid increase of refugees around the world, it can be expected that an increasing number of asylum seekers will also come to Latvia in the future. Immigrants are important for economic development and help prevent shortages in the workforce which have come about as a result of an aging society, a negative natural growth rate, and emigration. According to the results of a study conducted by the social policy center Providus (Providus 2014), Latvia is hoping for highly qualified immigrants; however, when recently compared internationally, Latvia was considered an unfavorable environment for immigrants and their children. Therefore, "Latvia's primary challenges in this area are to find a balance between immigrants' responsibilities and rights as well as to create the circumstances for immigrants to be able to learn Latvian."

The EU is devoting significant attention to the integration of immigrants and is supporting member states, also financially. During the period examined in this study, special attention was devoted to the integration of third-country nationals into Latvia, including the teaching of Latvian to asylum seekers. As this is a completely new experience not only for the responsible institutions in Latvia, but also for Latvian society, the attention devoted to this question at the end of 2015 (and afterwards) has been considerable. It seems fair to say that the question of refugees and their integration, notwithstanding the small number of such individuals in Latvia, will continue to be topical for a long time to come.

## 2.3. The language proficiency of Latvia's residents

### Native language

According to European Commission estimates from 2012, Latvian is spoken as a native language by approximately 1.55 million people across the world and as a second language in Latvia by 497,000 people (Lewis, Simons, Fennig 2015). According to the results of the 2014 LVA Survey, 63.4% of those surveyed considered Latvian to be one of their native languages<sup>6</sup> and 35.1% named Russian as their native language.

The 2011 Latvian National Census contained a question regarding the language most used at home. The results are proportionally like those of the results of the 2014 LVA Survey concerning native language. According to the 2011 census, 1.16 million people, or 62.1% of permanent residents (Figure 9), primarily used Latvian at home. There is no available information regarding the number of individuals abroad for whom Latvian is their native language. 699,000 residents, or 37.2%, primarily use Russian at home. According to the census results, 0.7% of residents speak a different language at home, mostly Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, or Lithuanian.

As the proportion of Latvians as part of the population increases with every year, the proportion of individuals for whom Latvian is their native language is also increasing (according to the 2000 census results, Latvian was the native language of 58.2% of inhabitants), while the proportion of the population made up of native speakers of Russian continues to decrease (in 2000, 37.5% were native speakers of Russian). However, in absolute numbers, the total number of Latvian speakers in Latvia continues to shrink, due to the fact that the total population keeps decreasing.

Language use at home

<sup>6</sup> Respondents to the LVA survey 2014 were permitted to name several native languages.

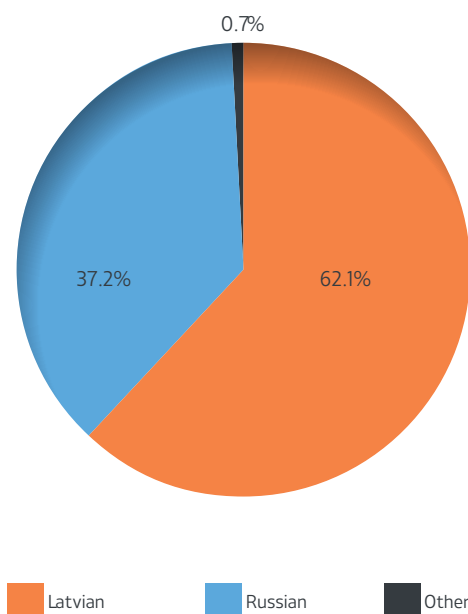


Figure 9. The language primarily used at home in 2011. Statistics: CSP, 2011 Latvian National Census

**The language most often  
spoken at home –  
Latvian and Russian**

**The language most spoken at home across ethnicities**

The language used at home mostly coincides with native language and ethnicity. According to the 2011 census, Latvians primarily use Latvian (85.2%) and less frequently Russian (7%) at home. Approximately 4/5 of Latvia's ethnic minority residents speak Russian at home (77.8%, 2011 Latvian National Census, 79.6%, SKDS 2014), while approximately one tenth mostly speak Latvian at home (8.9%, 2011 Latvian National Census, 9.6%, SKDS 2014). According to SKDS 2014, approximately 8.4% of ethnic minority residents speak Latvian and Russian about equally at home.

Of the so-called large ethnic minorities in Latvia, the Russians are the only ones who primarily speak their ethnic language, i.e., Russian, at home (86.2%). Russians speak Latvian at home less frequently (5.9%). Members of other ethnic minorities in Latvia, however, speak their ethnic languages less often and instead speak Latvian or Russian more often at home. Lithuanians and Estonians living in Latvia mostly speak Latvian at home (54.3% and 44.7%, respectively) and Russian less often (26.7% and 37.7%). Poles, Ukrainians, and Belarusians living in Latvia mainly speak Russian at home – 68.2%, 76.4%, and 79.7%, respectively. Only 17.8% of Poles, 8% of Ukrainians, and 9.3% of Belarusians use Latvian at home. Very few Lithuanians, Poles, Ukrainians, or Belarusians use their ethnic languages at home: only 7.4% of Lithuanians living in Latvia primarily use Lithuanian, 3.2% of Poles use Polish, 3.1% of Ukrainians use Ukrainian, and 0.7% of Belarusians use Belarusian (2011 Latvian National Census statistics).

### Native language across different age groups

Due to the fact that more individuals in younger generations consider themselves to be Latvians than in older generations, Latvia's young people more often state that Latvian is their native language (Figure 10). According to the results of the 2014 LVA Survey, 71.8% of young people aged 15 to 24, more than any other age group, list Latvian as one of their native languages, while this is indicated by 61-64% of representatives from other age groups. A similar proportion appears in the results of the 2011 Latvian National Census, with the youngest generation stating much more often than older generations that they primarily use Latvian at home.

Young people speak  
Latvian more often

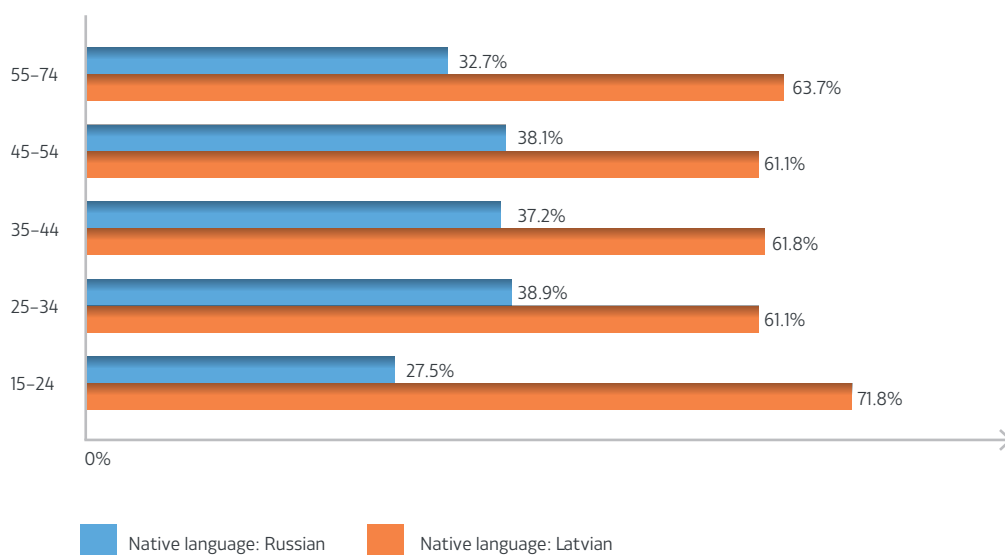


Table 10. Native language by age group. Statistics: LVA Survey 2014

### Native language in Latvia's regions

The residents of Vidzeme, Kurzeme, Zemgale, and Pierīga are primarily Latvians, therefore, the native language of the residents of these regions is also most often Latvian (Figure 11). According to the results of the 2014 LVA Survey, 88.8% of residents of the Vidzeme Region speak Latvian as their native language, 79.7% in Kurzeme, 76.4% in Zemgale, and 74.1% in Pierīga. At the same time, in Latgale and Rīga, where there are more representatives of ethnic minorities, the native language of residents is usually Russian. 59.5% of Latgale residents indicated in the 2014 LVA Survey that one of their native languages was Russian. Also, Latvian is the native language for approximately half of the residents of Rīga, while Russian is the native language for the other half. These statistics coincide for the most part with the statistics from the 2011 census regarding the choice of language used at home.

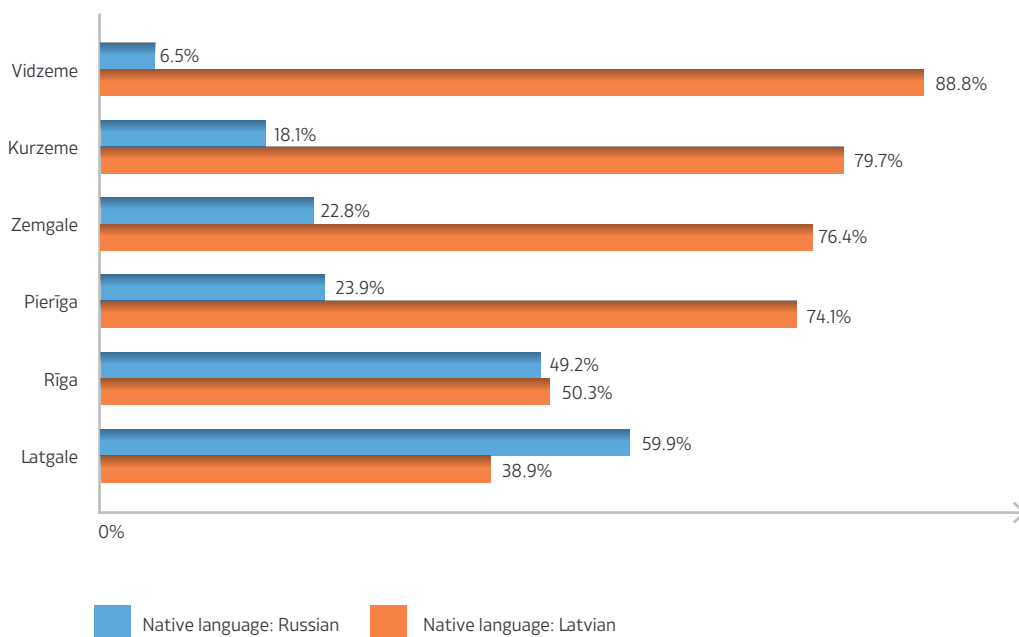


Figure 11. Native language in Latvia's regions. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

## Everyday communication in Latgalian

According to the 2011 census, 164,510 individuals, or approximately 8% of Latvia's population, use Latgalian<sup>7</sup> in their everyday lives. Every Latvian region has a portion of residents who speak Latgalian on an everyday basis. The lowest number is in Kurzeme, with only 1.4% of residents doing speaking Latgalian every day, while in Rīga, Pierīga, Vidzeme, and Latgale, this figure is 3.9-4.5%. As would be expected, the region with the highest proportion of everyday Latgalian speakers (32.1%) is Latgale (Table 10).

| Region  | Number of residents | Number of residents speaking Latgalian on an everyday basis | % of residents of the region | % of the individuals who speak Latgalian on an everyday basis (164 510) |
|---------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rīga    | 658 640             | 29 393                                                      | 4.5%                         | 17.9%                                                                   |
| Pierīga | 371 431             | 14 351                                                      | 3.9%                         | 8.7%                                                                    |
| Vidzeme | 211 309             | 9408                                                        | 4.5%                         | 5.7%                                                                    |
| Kurzeme | 270 498             | 3655                                                        | 1.4%                         | 2.2%                                                                    |
| Zemgale | 254 461             | 10 113                                                      | 4.0%                         | 6.2%                                                                    |
| Latgale | 304 032             | 97 590                                                      | 32.1%                        | 59.3%                                                                   |

Table 10. Residents who speak Latgalian on an everyday basis across Latvia's regions in 2011. Statistics: CSP, 2011 Latvian National Census

<sup>7</sup> Latgalian is a Latvian variety spoken in Latgale (the eastern part of Latvia), which has a separate written tradition from the rest of Latvian.

Of those residents who use Latgalian on an everyday basis, three quarters primarily use Latvian at home and one quarter use Russian (Table 11). As noted in the CSP overview of the census results, from information taken at one particular moment in time (2011) it is not possible to make any conclusions regarding changes in the number of residents speaking Latgalian. However, one can make some indirect observations. Individuals using Latgalian on an everyday basis are more likely to be older residents of Latvia. In addition, the average age of Latgalian speakers is 46.2 years, which is greater than the average age of Latvian residents in general (41.6 years). Based on these statistics, the CSP predicts that in the future the number of Latgalian speakers may decrease. However, focused, concerted efforts in the mass media, schools, publishing, cultural life, and so on can secure and expand the use of Latgalian among Latgalians (for more on efforts already implemented see Chapter 6).

| Language used at home | Number of residents who use Latgalian on an everyday basis | % of residents who speak Latgalian on an everyday basis (164 510) |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Latvian               | 123 052                                                    | 74.8%                                                             |
| Russian               | 40 553                                                     | 24.7%                                                             |
| Lithuanian            | 127                                                        | 0.1%                                                              |
| Ukrainian             | 108                                                        | 0.1%                                                              |
| Polish                | 285                                                        | 0.2%                                                              |
| Belarusian            | 80                                                         | 0.1%                                                              |
| Other                 | 301                                                        | 0.2%                                                              |
| Not indicated         | 4                                                          | < 0.1%                                                            |

Table 11. Number of residents who speak Latgalian on an everyday basis according to the language used at home in 2011. Statistics: CSP, 2011 Latvian National Census

### The dynamics of Latvian and Russian language proficiency

Language proficiency among the population is a meaningful indicator in circumstances characterized by language competition; this can also influence language use in a particular sociolinguistic domain (Druviete 2008, 224). In Latvia, when compared to other languages in a global context, Latvian finds itself in a fairly good situation. It also exists in competition with two economically powerful languages – Russian and English. In addition, the historical circumstances surrounding Russian in Latvia and its speech community's self-sufficiency contribute to the insufficient realization of the status of Latvian (Druviete 2008, 232; Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011, 28). Of course, on an individual level, a person's language knowledge is a priceless asset to that person, and also to the society he or she represents. However, society's understanding of sociolinguistic processes and participation in the implementation of the ideals and goals of language policy continues to be a topical issue.

Language competition

In the context of the European Union, the language knowledge of Latvia's residents is positive; we have a multilingual society with 95% of Latvia's residents speaking at least one language in addition to their native language. This is the second highest level in the European Union after Luxembourg (Eurobarometer 2012). This also corresponds to the joint EU goal for establishing a multilingual society in order to guarantee competitiveness; however, due to historical circumstances, the collection of languages known by Latvia's inhabitants does not correspond to the EU's general situation or goals. These are to learn and promote the learning and popularity of EU languages in particular, including the so-called small and disappearing EU languages (*Valodas politika ES* 2015).

Even though an increasing amount of other languages are slowly entering Latvia's linguistic space, the most widespread language among Latvians continues to be Russian, which 98% of Latvians speak at least at a basic level (LVA Survey 2014). Knowledge of Russian among Latvians has not changed significantly since mid-2009 (98% in 2009, 97% in 2012). The majority of the members of Latvia's ethnic minorities also speak Latvian. In 2014, 91% of respondents for whom Latvian was not their native language indicated that they spoke Latvian at least at a basic level. This proportion has also not significantly changed since 2009 (91% in the 2009 LVA Survey, 90% in the 2012 LVA Survey).

In general, proficiency in Latvian continues to be slightly less prevalent than proficiency in Russian across society (Figure 12). According to the results of the 2014 LVA Survey, Latvian is spoken by 96.7% of Latvia's residents and Russian is spoken by 98.5%. Until 2009, an increase in Latvian language proficiency could be observed among members of the ethnic minority community. The results of the most recent surveys show that while the number of those speaking Latvian is not increasing, the overall degree of proficiency is improving. One tenth of the ethnic minority community continues to not speak Latvian. This situation has already been explained in the past by the fact that the portion of society that can be reached is able to communicate in Latvian well, but the remaining percentage most likely does not wish to learn Latvian. The proportion of speakers of Latvian can change due to natural changes and physical movement, which is a slow but inescapable process.

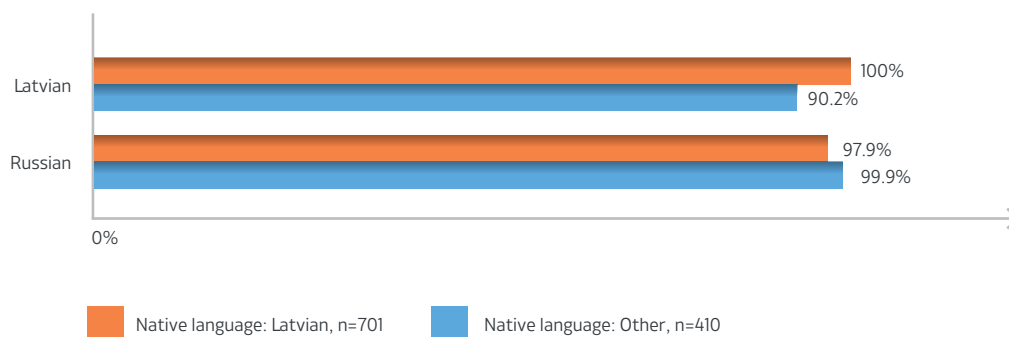


Figure 12. Proficiency in Latvian and Russian at least at a basic level. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

### Latvian and Russian proficiency across different age groups

It can be projected that knowledge of Latvian will slowly continue to improve in the future. This is indicated by the proficiency levels in Latvian among Latvia's young people. According to the 2014 LVA Survey, all young people aged 15-24 and nearly all those aged 25-34 speak Latvian at least at a basic level (Figure 13). Comparing proficiency in Latvian and Russian in society, it can be seen that future shifts may favor Latvian, as Latvia's young people (aged 15-24) speak Latvian better than they do Russian; 100% indicate that they speak Latvian, while 93% indicate that they speak Russian. In all other age groups, knowledge of Russian is greater or equal to knowledge of Latvian.

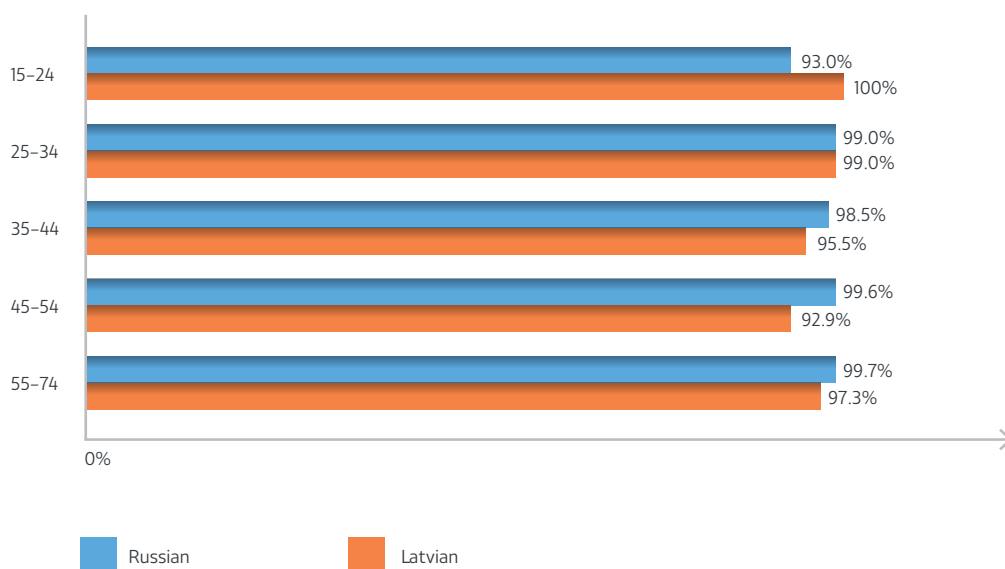
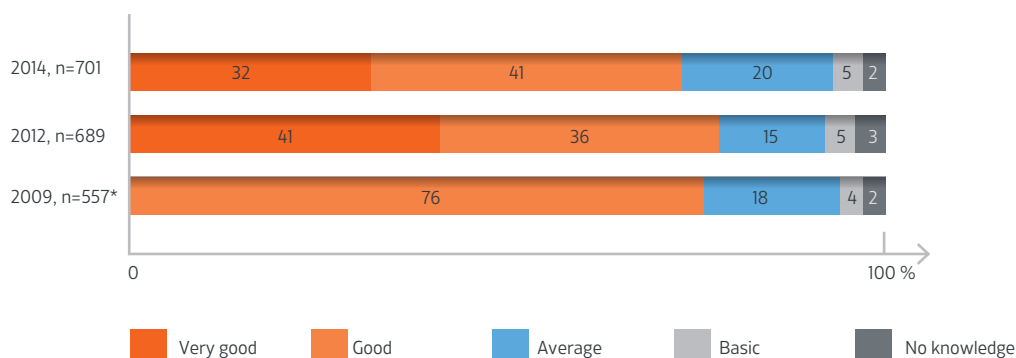


Figure 13. Latvian and Russian language proficiency by age group in 2014. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

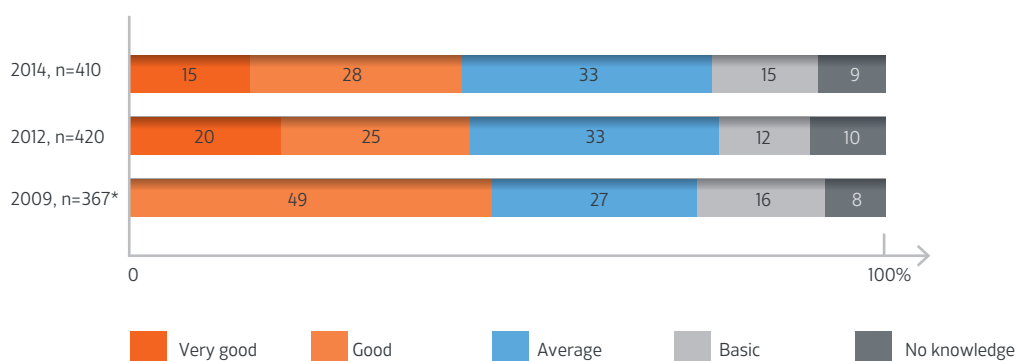
### Self-assessment of proficiency in Latvian and Russian

Differences in proficiency in Latvian and Russian appear when individuals assess their own abilities. 72% of Latvians (Figure 14) feel that they speak Russian very well or well; this number has decreased slightly compared to previous surveys (77% in 2012, 76% in 2009). A change can also be seen in the number of Latvians who feel that they speak Russian very well (41% in 2012, 32% in 2014). At the same time, 44% of members of the ethnic minority community (Figure 15) feel that they speak Latvian very well or well (45% in 2012, 48% in 2009). This means that the language used for communication in society is more often Russian than Latvian.



\* Kritērijs "ļoti labi" netika iekļauts 2009. gada aptaujā

Figure 14. Self-assessment of Russian language proficiency among Latvians (2009-2014).  
Statistics: 2009, 2012, 2014 LVA Surveys



\* Kritērijs "ļoti labi" netika iekļauts 2009. gada aptaujā

Figure 15. Self-assessment of Latvian language proficiency among members of ethnic minorities (2009-2014). Statistics: 2009, 2012, 2014 LVA Surveys

Future changes in the Latvian and Russian language proficiency of Latvia's residents can be seen in the differences between age groups. 87.3% of Latvia's young people aged 15-24 indicate that they speak Latvian very well or well, while 58.5% indicate that they speak Russian at this same level (Figure 16). In the next age group (aged 25-34), Latvian language proficiency is also better than Russian language proficiency. Members of older generations in Latvia speak Russian better than Latvian, according to their own self-assessment (Figure 17). These statistics indicate that Latvia's residents speak Russian better than Latvian, but that for younger generations this is no longer the case. While Russian, instead of Latvian, is the more likely language of conversation for older generations, for younger generations the reverse is already the case.

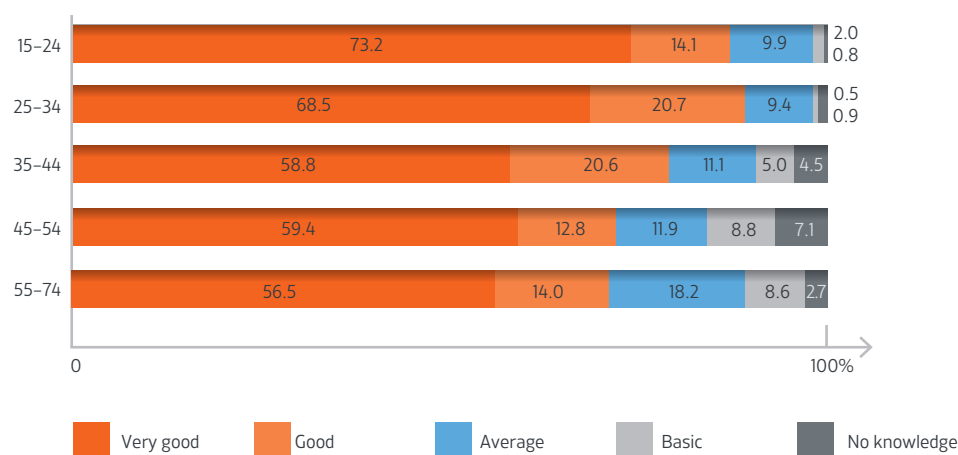


Figure 16. Self-assessment of Latvian language proficiency by age group in Latvia. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

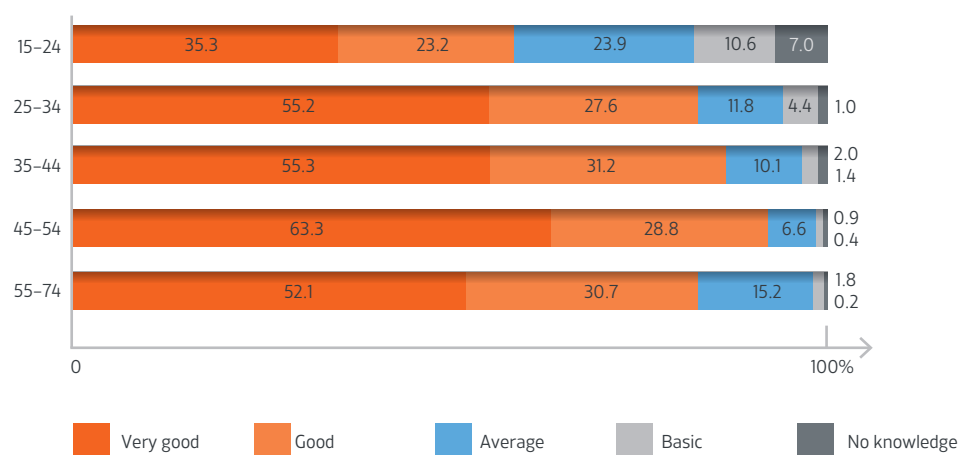


Figure 17. Self-assessment of Russian language proficiency by age group in Latvia. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

The 2014 SKDS Survey also confirms that among young people (aged 18-24) in Latvia's ethnic minority communities, there are almost no residents at all who do not speak Latvian (only 1.7% of respondents indicate that they do not speak Latvian, almost do not speak Latvian, or speak it poorly), while the majority consider their Latvian language proficiency to be excellent (understand everything, read without problems, speak, write: 38.9%) or good (understand most things well, read, speak, and write, though occasionally make mistakes: 38.4%). One fifth (20.3%) consider their Latvian language proficiency to be satisfactory (can communicate by speaking or writing, though they have difficulties and make mistakes). Members of the ethnic minority community in the next age group (24-34) also mostly rate their Latvian proficiency as good (31.9%) or excellent (31.2%). Members of the ethnic minority community who are aged 35-64 mostly rate their Latvian proficiency as good or satisfactory, while those older than 65 mostly rate their Latvian proficiency as weak.

#### **Latvian language proficiency across different uses**

44% of members of Latvia's ethnic minority community evaluate their Latvian language proficiency as very good or good, the majority of members of the ethnic minority community indicated in the LVA Survey 2014 that their Latvian language proficiency was sufficient (Figure 18). Three-quarters of members of the ethnic minority community considered their comprehension (ECML 2015) abilities – listening and reading proficiency – to be completely or more likely sufficient. This means that not only those individuals who speak Latvian very well or well, but also those who rate their proficiency as medium, consider their comprehension abilities to be sufficient in these areas. However, it is more difficult for members of ethnic minorities to speak and write; 68% consider their writing abilities to be completely or more likely sufficient and 56% evaluate their speaking abilities at the same levels. Thus, comprehension abilities (listening and reading) are evaluated by respondents as being at a higher level than speaking or writing abilities.

Those who rate their Latvian language proficiency as sufficient are those who assess it as very good or good. These are more likely to be younger respondents (15-34/44); individuals with higher education; students and schoolchildren, managers, specialists, and stay-at-home mothers (also those on maternity leave). Differences between receptive and productive language proficiency are seen less among young people than among older generations for whom productive proficiency is noticeably weaker than receptive proficiency.

Language proficiency is also impacted by the linguistic environment: the worst Latvian language proficiency levels are in Latgale and Rīga where the environment is the least Latvian. In these areas, those whose native language is not Latvian assess their Latvian language proficiency the weakest across all uses. Sufficient Latvian language proficiency is most often found in the regions and cities where Latvian is used the most.

**It is more difficult to read and write in Latvian**

**The weakest Latvian language proficiency is in Rīga and Latgale**

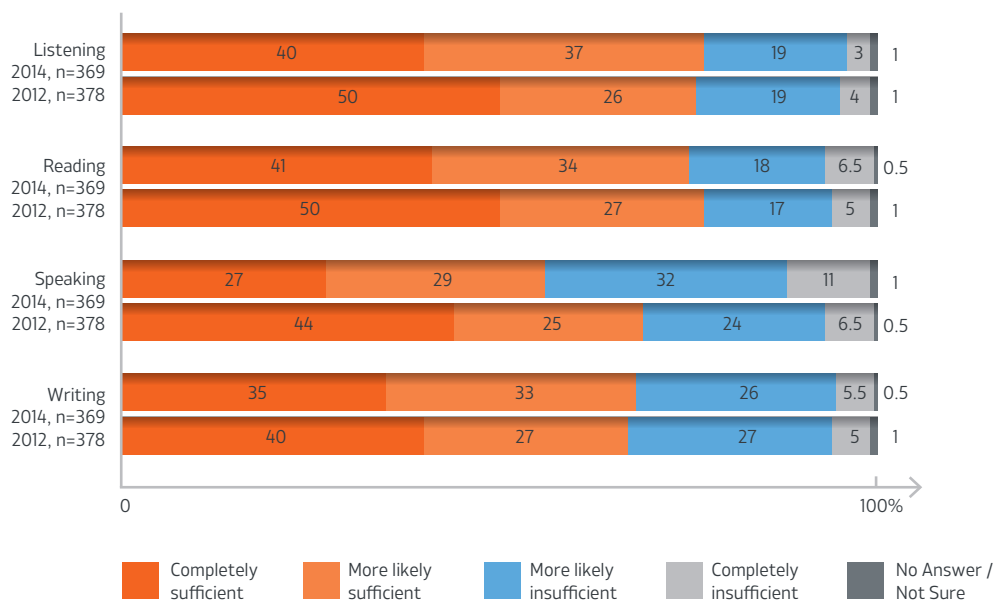


Figure 18. Self-assessment by members of the ethnic minority community in Latvia of their Latvian language proficiency across different uses. Statistics: LVA Survey 2012, 2014

### Foreign language use in Latvia

The most popular foreign languages in Latvia are Russian and English, with German language proficiency continuing to decrease (Figure 19). Analyzing the statistics concerning Russian language proficiency, it must be noted that for most members of ethnic minority communities, Russian is their native language. Likewise, other foreign languages, which are the native languages of other ethnic minorities within Latvia (e.g., Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Polish, and so on), are generally spoken as the native languages of members of these communities, with knowledge of these languages among Latvians and Russians being very rare.

According to the statistics from the 2014 LVA Survey, English, which is the second most spoken foreign language after Russian, is spoken at least at a basic level by 55% of Latvia's residents. English proficiency is higher among Latvians, with 59% of Latvians compared with 47% of members of ethnic minorities indicating that they speak English at least at a basic level. The third most spoken foreign language is German, which is spoken by only one fifth of respondents, with German also being spoken more often by Latvians: 23% of Latvians compared to 16% of members of ethnic minorities indicate that they have at least basic proficiency in German. Knowledge of other foreign languages is very rare among Latvia's residents.

The most popular foreign languages

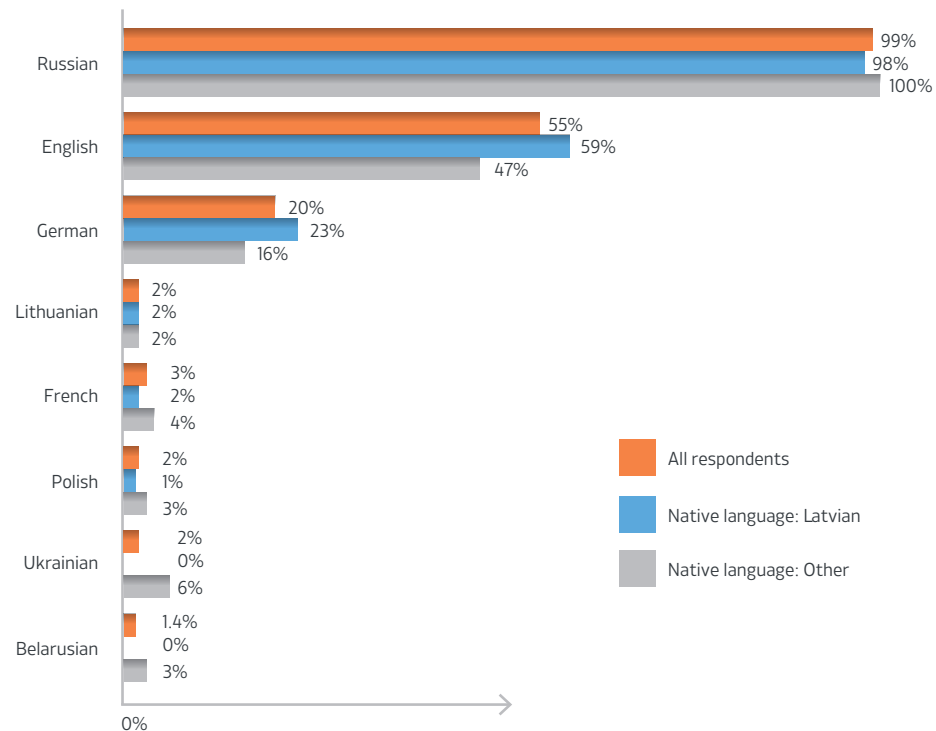


Figure 19. Foreign language proficiency at least at a basic level in 2014. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

The level of foreign language proficiency among Latvia's residents has decreased in recent years. Overall, even the percentage of residents who speak English has not increased. 64% of Latvians in 2012 indicated that they spoke English, while 59% indicated the same in 2014. A similar tendency can be observed among members of the ethnic minority community; 53% of ethnic minority respondents in 2009 indicated that they spoke English at least at a basic level, while 47% indicated the same in 2014. Of course, LVA surveys do not measure the quality of residents' proficiency; these statistical indicators are based on residents' subjective evaluation of their own foreign language proficiency and differences can be based on subjective perceptions. However, it is also possible that the decreased level of English language proficiency is due to the large amount of emigration. As emigration has occurred primarily to English-speaking countries, it is possible that those who have left Latvia have been precisely those who are speakers of English. Of course, one cannot ignore society's collective understanding of what constitutes good language proficiency; and this understanding can change over time with greater opportunities for encountering a language in practice. As can be sensed in everyday life, the popularity of English and the necessity to use it are only increasing, therefore, people also have an opportunity to assess their real abilities in fully communicating in this language (see Geraghty, Conacher 2014 for more on self-assessment of language proficiency and its associated problems).

Considerable economic value and the existing language competition situation are most likely the reasons that in recent years the number of individuals speaking foreign languages other than English and Russian has decreased. The number of individuals speaking German has sharply decreased; in 2009, 36% of Latvians and 27% of members of the ethnic minority communities stated that they had at least basic proficiency in German, while in 2014 the same was claimed by 23% of Latvians and 16% of members of the ethnic minority communities. French is spoken by approximately 2-4% of residents and knowledge of French has even improved a small amount since 2009 (Figures 20 and 21). Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Lithuanian are mostly spoken as native languages; however, the number of individuals speaking these languages continues to decrease. Older members of the ethnic minority communities are those who speak these languages most often; however, unfortunately, they have not passed on this language knowledge to their descendants (2014 LVA Survey statistics).

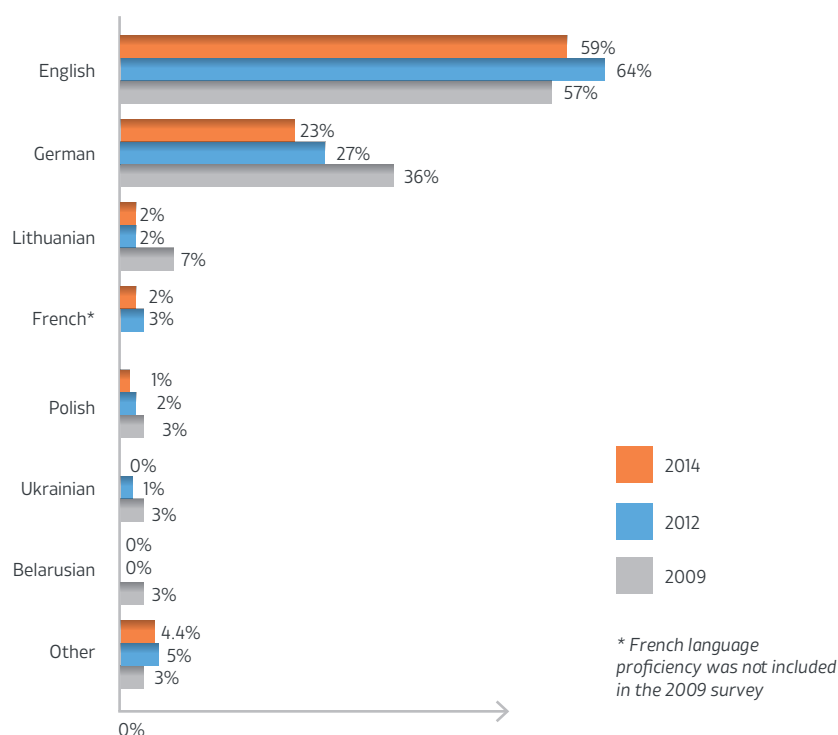


Figure 20. Foreign language proficiency at least at a basic level among Latvians (2009-2014). Statistics: 2009, 2012, 2014 LVA Surveys

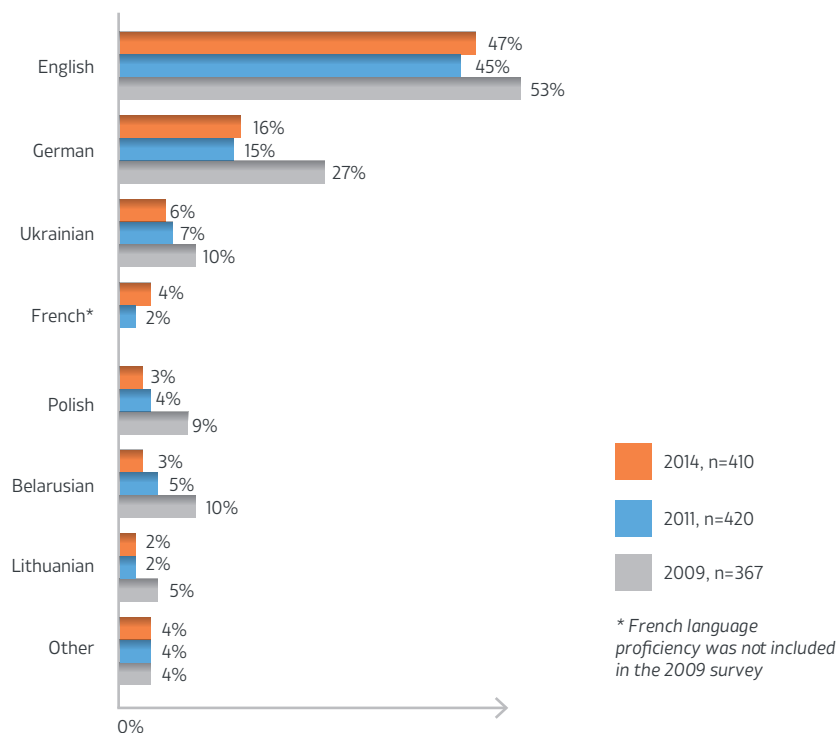


Figure 21. Foreign language proficiency at least at a basic level among members of ethnic minority communities (2009-2014). Statistics: 2009, 2012, 2014 LVA Surveys

## The increase in English language proficiency

### Self-assessment of English and German language proficiency

Although English language proficiency has not increased in Latvia during the period examined in this study, self-assessment of the quality of English language proficiency has significantly increased (Figure 22). There is an increasing number of people who speak English very well or well and a continuously decreasing number of people with only basic English language proficiency. In 2009, 14.8% of respondents indicated that they spoke English well, in 2014, 22.2% indicated the same. The proportion of individuals who consider their English language proficiency to be medium has remained about the same: 19.8% in 2009, 18.9% in 2014. However, the number of residents who feel that they have only basic proficiency in English has decreased: 20.2% in 2009, 13.8% in 2014 (2014 LVA Survey statistics).

In the Latvian as well as the ethnic minority target groups, the number of respondents who consider that they speak English very well or well increased during the period observed for this study. However, English language proficiency improved more rapidly among Latvians: for the Latvian target group, 14% in 2009, 25% in 2014; for the ethnic minority target group, 16% in 2009, 18% in 2014 (Figure 23).

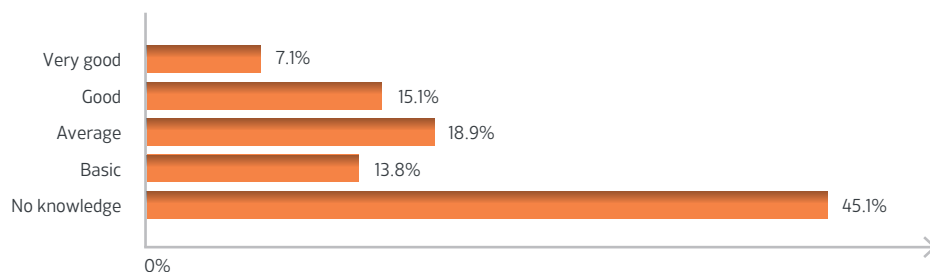


Figure 22. Self-assessment of English language proficiency among Latvia's residents in 2014. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

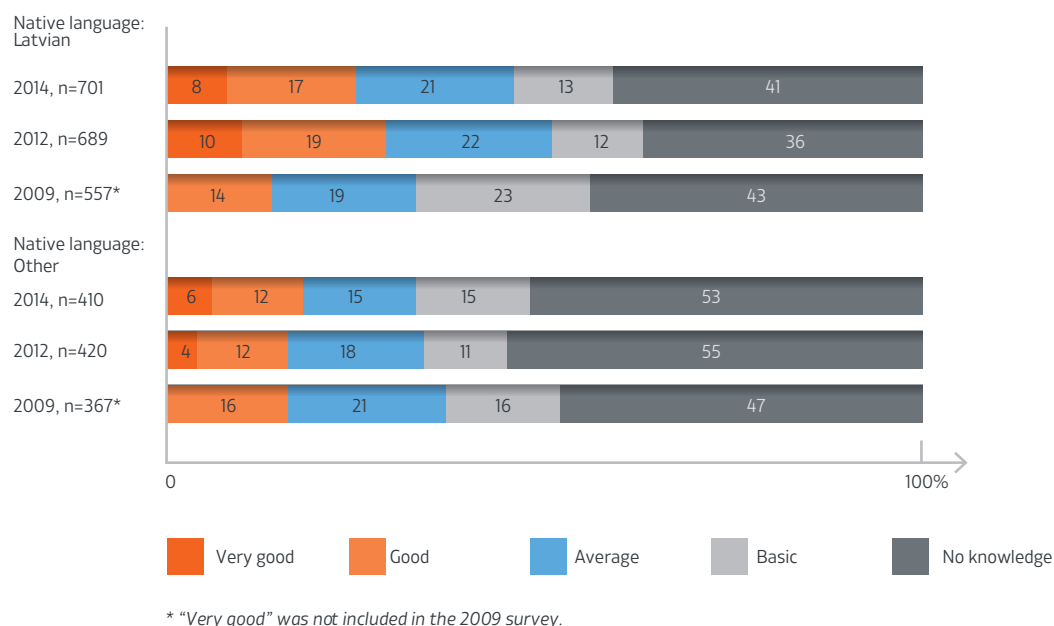


Figure 23. Self-assessment of English language proficiency among Latvians and members of ethnic minorities (2009-2014). Statistics: 2009, 2012, 2014 LVA Surveys

According to the 2014 LVA Survey, German is spoken very well or well by 3%, at a average level by 7%, and at a basic level by 10% of Latvia's residents (Figure 24). Self-assessment of German language proficiency is also at a higher level among Latvians than among members of ethnic minorities. In both target groups, the number of individuals who state that they have basic proficiency in German has decreased most rapidly, while the proportion of those respondents stating that they speak German very well, well, or at a average level has not significantly changed.

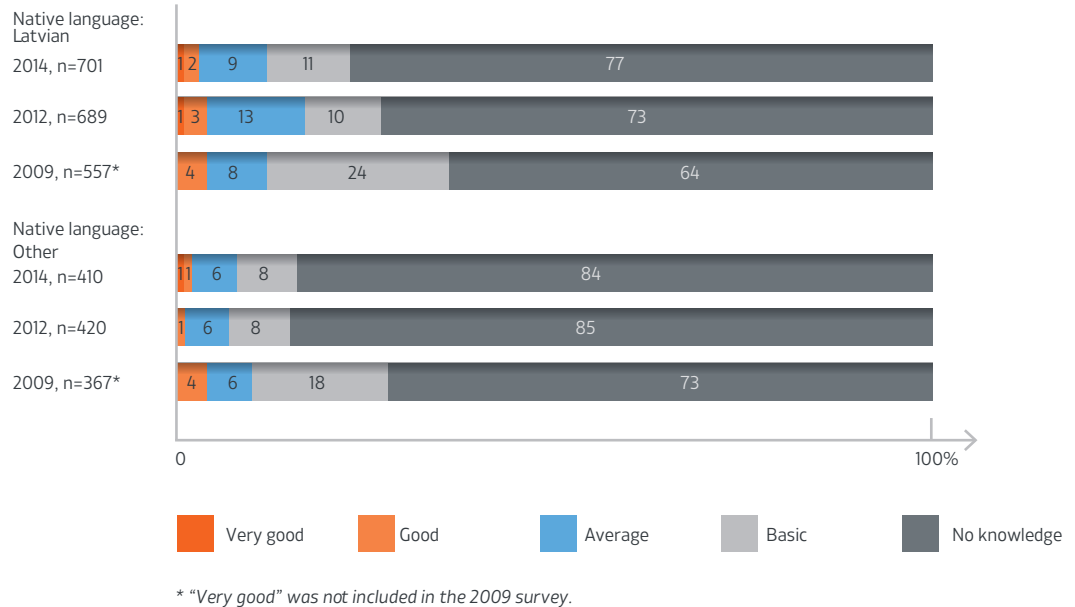


Figure 24. Self-assessment of German language proficiency among Latvians and members of ethnic minorities (2009-2014). Statistics: 2009, 2012, 2014 LVA Surveys

## English and German language proficiency by age

English language proficiency is not increasing percentagewise across all age groups, but this is mostly because young people in particular speak English increasingly well. Until 2014, English was taught in school from the third grade, but since September 1, 2014, it has been taught from the first grade. This was a decision that was also supported by parents. Children learn English easier and faster; and, in addition, the role of English in life continues to increase. Currently, 90.8% of young people aged 15-24 speak English at least at a basic level. Therefore, among Latvia's young people, proficiency in Russian and English is similar: 93% speak Russian at least at a basic level and 91% speak English at least at a basic level. The increase in the role of English is also shown by survey results indicating that in 2014, Latvia's young people assessed their English language proficiency at a higher level than their Russian language proficiency. According to the 2014 survey results, 61.3% of Latvia's young people considered their English language proficiency to be very good or good, while 58.5% of young people evaluated their Russian language proficiency at the same level (2014 LVA Survey results).

Since the 2009 survey results, the English language proficiency of young people has noticeably improved. In 2009, 89.1% of young people aged 17-25 indicated that they spoke English; of these, 34.4% rated their English language proficiency as good (61.3% in 2014), 36.9% as average (23.9% in 2014), and 17.8% as basic (5.9% in 2014). Proficiency in English continues to increase in popularity among young people, independent of their ethnicity or native language (2009 LVA Survey results).

In other age groups, English language proficiency is not higher than Russian language proficiency. For example, 99% of individuals aged 25-34 speak Russian and of these, 82.8% rate their Russian language proficiency as very good or good; 85.2% of individuals of this same age group speak English and of these, 48.8% rate their English language proficiency as very good or good. Among even older people, English language proficiency is less widespread and those who do speak English, do not speak it as well as younger people (2014 LVA Survey results).

German language proficiency is not as closely associated with age as English language proficiency. Approximately one sixth of respondents aged 15-24 speak German, while the same is true for approximately one quarter of respondents aged 55-74 (Figure 25).

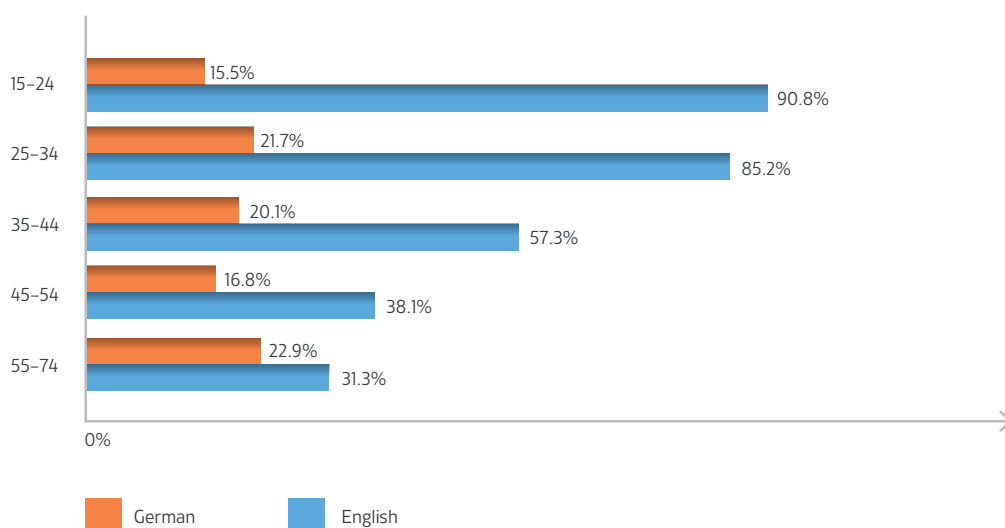


Figure 25. English and German language proficiency by age group. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

German language proficiency is evenly spread across the territory of Latvia; however, there are regional differences in English language proficiency. Knowledge of English is most widespread in Rīga (66.8% of Rīga residents speak English) and also in Pierīga (57.2%) and Zemgale (56.7%), while the lowest indicators are in Latgale, where 37.6% of residents speak English (Figure 26). Based on the ethnodemographic character of their residents and the level of knowledge of Latvian and Russian, Rīga and Latgale are similar linguistic environments, but due to the role of English in world business, the job market, and education, this noticeably differentiates Rīga and Latgale. English is far more widespread in Rīga, due to Rīga's role as Latvia's center for business, education, and science.

**English and German  
language proficiency  
by region**

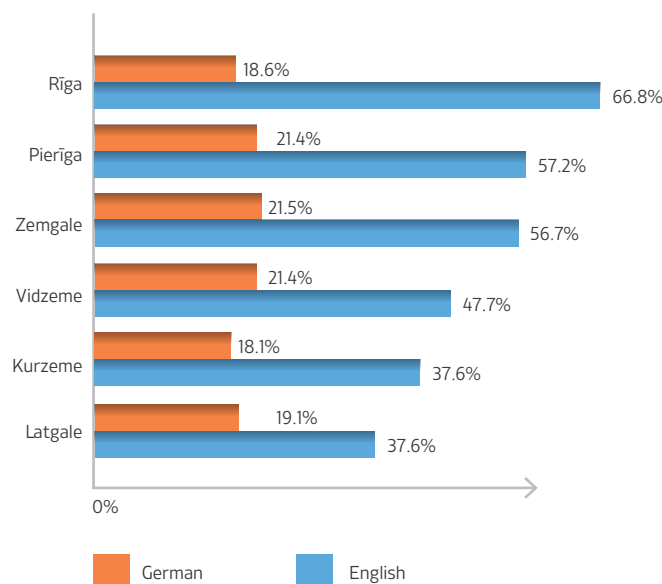


Figure 26. English and German language proficiency by region. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

## The increased role of English

Comparing the language proficiency of Latvia's residents, English language proficiency has improved the most during the period observed for this study. Though the overall number of people speaking English at least at a basic level has not increased, the number of those speaking English very well or well has increased and the number of those speaking English only at a basic level has decreased. English has become a necessary asset in the job market, education, and even in the social hierarchy, as it is closely linked with youth popular culture. Therefore, it is not surprising that the groups which speak English especially well are younger generations (aged 15-34), students, individuals with higher education; managers, entrepreneurs, the self-employed; as well as Rīga residents (2014 LVA Survey results).

Future changes in the language proficiency of Latvia's residents can be seen in the fact that Latvia's young people (aged 15-34) evaluate their English language proficiency higher than their Russian language proficiency. It is a positive sign that proficiency in other languages is also increasing among Latvia's young people; however, these are not separately mentioned in the survey due to their limited extent. 7% of those surveyed between the ages of 15 and 27 indicated that they spoke at least one other language not separately listed in the survey at least at a basic level (2014 LVA Survey results).

## 2.4. The foreign language proficiency, use, and linguistic attitudes of Latvia's residents in the context of the European Union

Due to the high level of Russian language proficiency among Latvians and Latvian-language proficiency among members of ethnic minorities in Latvia, the language proficiency levels in Latvia are very good in the EU context; knowledge of more than one language is more widespread in Latvia than it is on average in the EU (Figure 27). As mentioned earlier, almost all of Latvia's residents (95%) speak another language in addition to their native language (EU average: 54%), 54% speak at least two additional languages (EU average: 25%), 13% speak at least three additional languages (EU average: 10%). There are only eight countries in the European Union in which the majority of residents are able to communicate in at least two foreign languages (Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Malta, Denmark, and the three Baltic countries) (Eurobarometer 2012).

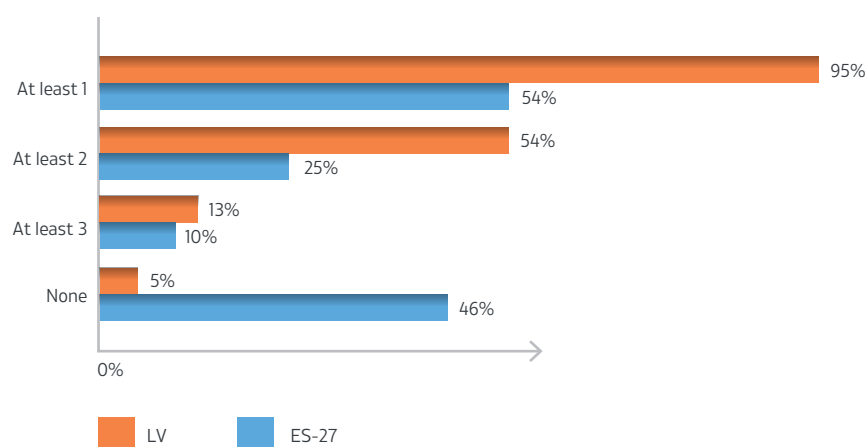


Figure 27: The number of languages in which Latvia's residents can communicate compared to the EU-27<sup>8</sup>. Statistics: Eurobarometer 2012

Of course, Latvia's residents speak Russian much more than the average EU resident (67% of Eurobarometer 2012 respondents in Latvia stated that they could converse in Russian; the EU average is 5%); however, Latvia's residents also state they are able to hold a conversation in English more than the average EU resident (46% in Latvia; the EU average is 38%) and the same is true for their German abilities (14% in Latvia; the EU average is 11%). Even though Russian is not an official language of the European Union, it is among the five most spoken foreign

Trends in foreign language proficiency in Europe

<sup>8</sup> The EU-27 countries are the 27 countries of the EU: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom. Croatia joined the European Union as its 28th member state on 1 July 2013.

languages in the EU after English, French, German, and Spanish. The Baltic countries are the only EU member states where the most widespread foreign language spoken is Russian. In the formerly Communist countries of the EU (e.g., Bulgaria, Slovakia, Estonia, Poland, and the Czech Republic), knowledge of Russian is decreasing rapidly, but in Latvia, as explained earlier, changes are occurring slowly. However, clear changes can be seen in English language proficiency; compared with Eurobarometer 2005, the corresponding 2012 study shows that in the formerly Communist EU member states (e.g., the Baltic countries, Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania), English language proficiency has increased rapidly (Eurobarometer 2005, 2012).

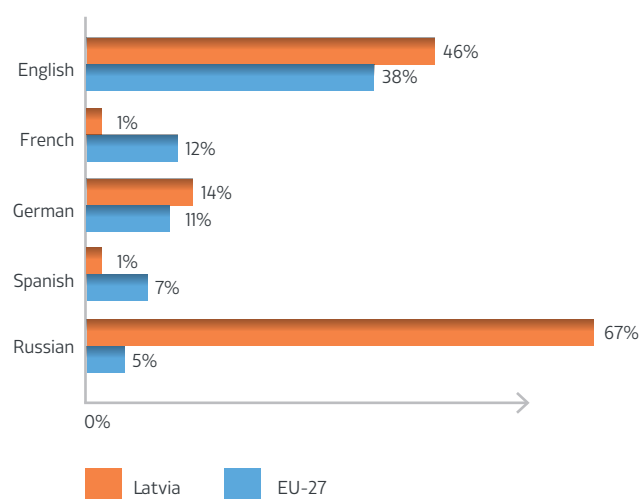


Figure 28. Languages in which Latvia's residents are able to converse compared to the EU-27. Statistics: Eurobarometer 2012.

### Attitudes towards multilingualism in Latvia

#### Attitudes towards foreign language acquisition and usage

Latvia's residents also differ from the average EU resident in that in Latvia there is broad support for the idea and goals of multilingualism. 91% of Latvia's residents feel that in the European Union everyone should speak at least one other language in addition to their native language, which is higher than the EU average (84%). In addition, 81% feel that everyone should speak at least one language in addition to their native language (the EU average is 72%). Furthermore, respondents in Latvia are more likely to feel that there is no need for a common language of communication among EU residents (46% – everyone needs a common language, 50% – a common language is unnecessary), while the average EU resident feels that a common language is necessary (69% – everyone needs a common language, 27% – a common language is unnecessary) (Eurobarometer 2012).

### The most popular foreign languages in Europe

As almost all of Latvia's residents are able to communicate in several languages, 97% feel that foreign languages are useful; this is also higher level than

the EU average (88%). Almost everyone in Latvia and in other EU countries (Latvia: ~ 100%, EU average: 98%) agrees that learning foreign languages are useful for children. Survey respondents in Latvia feel that the most useful languages for their own personal development and for that of their children are English (personal development: 72%, for children: 92%), Russian (personal development: 50%, for children: 48%), and German (personal development: 17%, for children: 21%); other languages are mentioned very rarely. Among EU residents as a whole, on average they also feel that the most useful languages for their personal development and for that of their children are English (personal development: 67%, for children: 79%) and German (personal development: 17%, for children: 20%); however, Russian was mentioned rarely. After German, the next languages mentioned were French (personal development: 16%, for children: 20%), Spanish (personal development: 14%, for children: 16%), and Chinese – though it was mentioned only in the context of being useful for children by EU residents (14%) and not at all by Latvian residents. (Figures 29 and 30). It is interesting to note that Russian is considered useful specifically in the Baltic region, i.e., in all three of the Baltic countries as well as in Finland (Eurobarometer 2012), which can be explained by the historical and economic situation, on one hand, and the geographic circumstances, on the other hand.

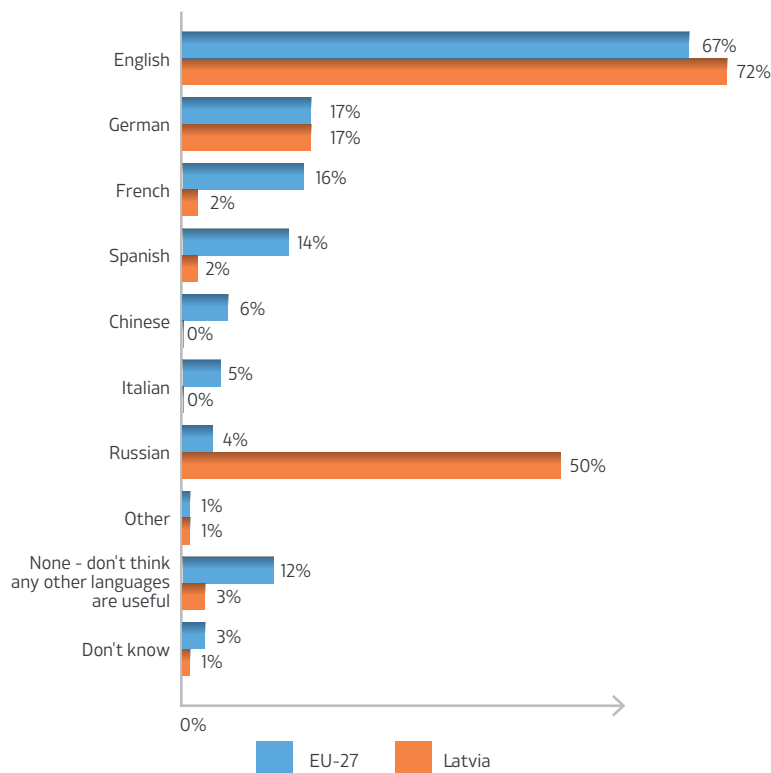


Figure 29. The most useful languages for personal development in the EU. Statistics: Eurobarometer 2012

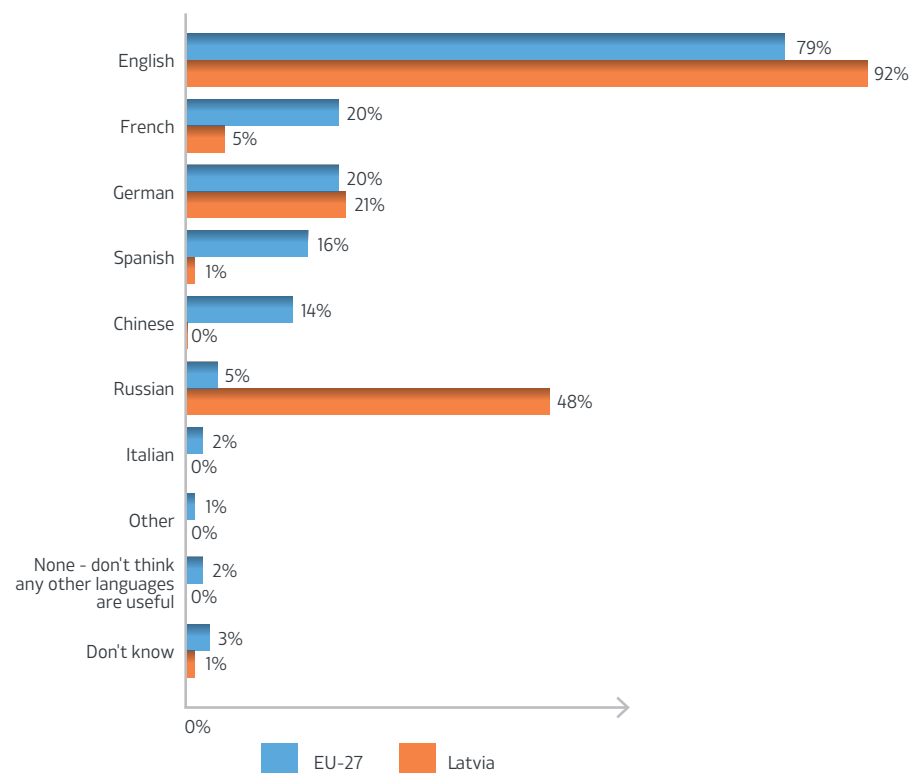


Figure 30. The most useful languages for children in the EU. Statistics: Eurobarometer 2012

## Foreign language use

### Why is foreign language knowledge useful?

The fact that the linguistic environment in Latvia is multilingual is also shown by foreign language use in daily life. Almost half of Latvia's residents use their first foreign language in everyday life (44% every day or almost every day, 24% often, but not every day; EU averages: 24% and 23%, respectively). This is also one of the highest levels in the European Union (after Luxembourg and Malta). The most frequently used foreign language is Russian, which is used in everyday life by 61% of Latvia's residents for whom it is a foreign language. English is used by 19% of Latvia's residents in daily life. Latvia's residents use a foreign language most often for recreation and in their free time, but also for reasons related to work. 65% watch films, television, and listen to radio in foreign languages; 54% use foreign languages to communicate with friends, 42% use foreign languages at work, and 38% use foreign languages on the internet (Eurobarometer 2012).

## Foreign language acquisition

### Motivations for foreign language acquisition

In contrast to the European Union average, almost all of Latvia's residents have at some point studied a foreign language (only 3% indicate that they have never studied a foreign language, EU average: 23%). Even though half of Latvia's residents, just like the EU average, are not currently studying any language (48%

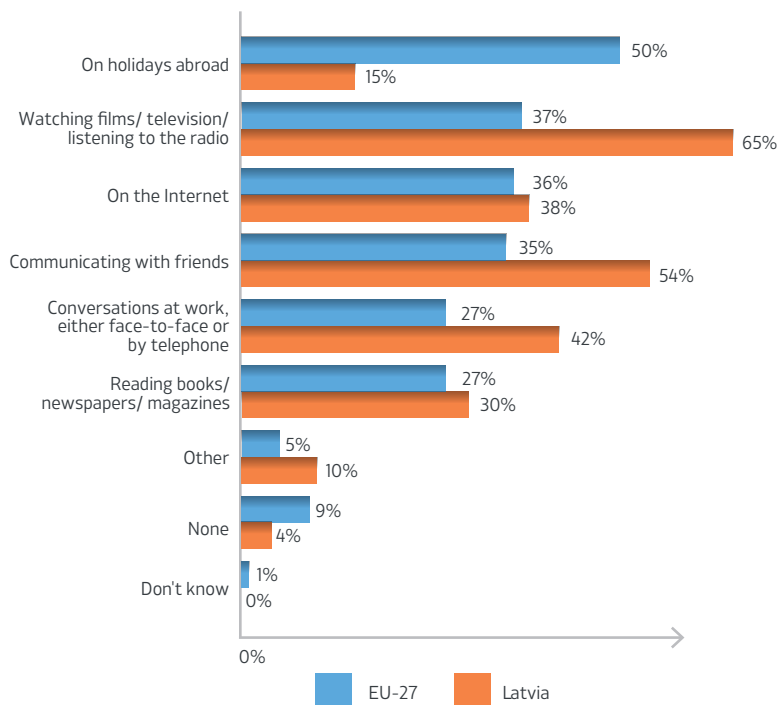


Figure 31. Situations for foreign language use in the EU and Latvia. Statistics: Eurobarometer 2012

of respondents in Latvia indicated that they have not studied any foreign language recently and do not plan on doing so in the near future, EU average: 44%), the same amount (48%) have studied a foreign language in the last two years or plan on doing so in the near future (EU average: 29%) (Eurobarometer 2012).

Latvia's residents have primarily studied foreign languages in school (90% mentioned that they had studied foreign languages in school), this is followed by informal communication with people who speak the foreign language as their native language (33%) as well as learning by watching television, films, and listening to the radio (33%). 42% felt that studying a foreign language in school was the most effective means for language learning, 15% felt that informal conversations with native speakers was the most effective means (Eurobarometer 2012).

Latvia's residents indicate that they are motivated most to study foreign languages by opportunities to study them without cost (42%, EU average: 29%). The results of the study also show the practical reasons for foreign language study; Latvia's residents feel that foreign language learning provides opportunities for finding a better job (25%) or for work abroad (22%). In addition to free language learning, EU residents are motivated to learn foreign languages if they are paid to study them (19%) or if there is a chance to study a language in a country where it is spoken (18%). A lack of motivation is listed as a reason by both Latvia's residents and EU residents in general for not studying foreign languages (in Latvia:

43%, EU average: 34%), lack of time (in Latvia: 29%, EU average: 28%) as well as the costs associated with foreign language study (in Latvia: 29%, EU average: 25%) (Eurobarometer 2012).

In responding to questions about the benefits gained from language knowledge, practical uses are often given by Latvia's residents: the opportunity to work abroad (67%), study abroad (56%), and to get a better job (50%); likewise, respondents mention that foreign languages are necessary for work (50%). EU residents also indicated that foreign languages provide the opportunity to work abroad (61%) and that they can be used at work (53%), but they more often mention the opportunity to use foreign languages on vacations abroad (47%).

Thus, reasons connected with the economic usefulness of foreign language acquisition and proficiency dominate among the responses of Latvia's residents. Foreign language proficiency, especially English language proficiency, is associated with the opportunity to find a better job in Latvia and abroad (Eurobarometer 2012).

## 2.5. Latvian language acquisition: the experience and needs of Latvia's ethnic minorities

### Methods for Latvian language acquisition

Representatives of Latvia's ethnic minorities have mainly learned Latvian at school; according to the results of the 2014 LVA Survey, this is the case for 70% of this community (Figure 32). In addition to formal education, language acquisition is aided by the use of Latvian in informal circumstances such as social situations (47%), interacting with friends (43%), and the use of Latvian at work (41%) as well as accessing Latvian-language mass media (38%). Approximately one-quarter of respondents learned Latvian on language courses or in their circle of family and friends. Approximately one fifth indicated that they learned Latvian through self-study<sup>9</sup>. Since 2012, the proportion of respondents who indicated that they learned Latvian in an informal context has increased; this includes interacting with friends or speaking Latvian in everyday life on the street, in shops, and so on, as well as using Latvian with co-workers.

Those who indicated that they learned Latvian on courses mostly attended free courses, which were paid for by the national or local government (44%). Approximately one quarter participated in courses paid for by their workplace or courses paid for by the respondents themselves. Those who speak Latvian very well or well, learned the language in school (85%) as well as in an informal context, by interacting with friends (58%) and speaking Latvian on the street, at stores, and in other social situations (54%).

<sup>9</sup> In the 2014 LVA Survey, the respondents were able to select more than one method of language acquisition.

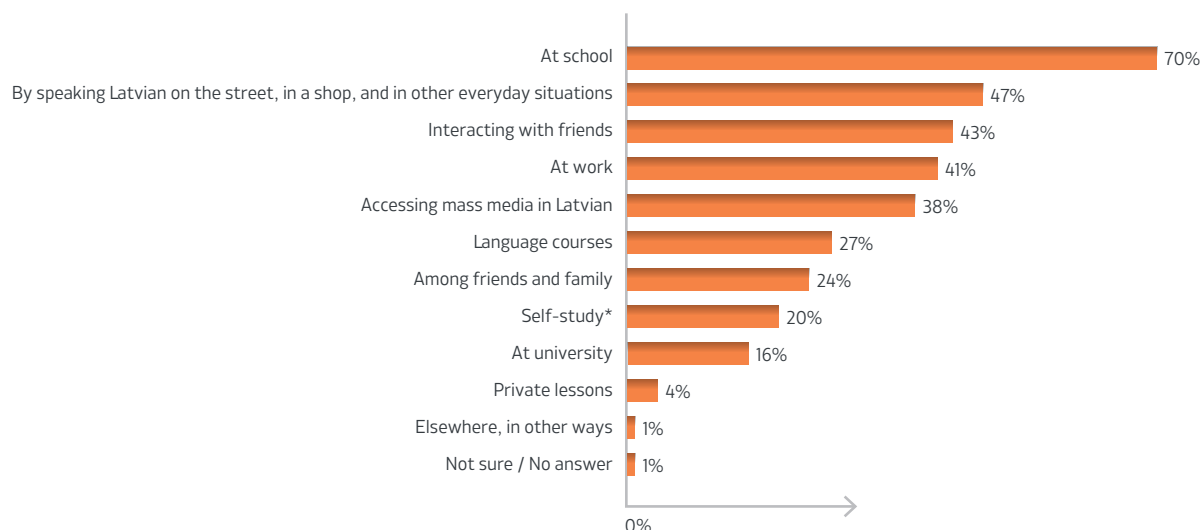


Figure 32. Methods and forms of Latvian language acquisition. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

Respondents of all age groups most often stated that they learned Latvian at school, with this being the case most often for younger people (90% of those aged 15-24, 93.5% of those aged 25-34, 73.1% of those aged 35-44, 59.7% of those aged 45-54, and 52.2% of those aged 55-74). The youngest generation also often mentioned that they had learned Latvian by speaking with friends; approximately half of the respondents aged 15-44 indicated that they had learned Latvian by speaking with friends. Approximately half of the respondents of all age groups stated that they were aided in learning Latvian by communication in Latvian on the street, in shops, and in other social situations. Older respondents indicated more often than younger respondents that they had learned Latvian at work; this was the case for approximately half of respondents aged 35-74. All respondents also indicated that accessing Latvian-language mass media also helped in learning Latvian. Members of older generations studied Latvian more often on language courses (those aged 55-74: 38.9%; those aged 45-54: 40.3%).

Latgale differs from the other regions when we compare statistics. In other regions, more than half of the respondents indicated that they were aided in learning Latvian by speaking Latvian on the street, in shops, or in other social situations, as well as by interacting with friends and colleagues. In Latgale, however, these answers were mentioned rarely (in approximately one quarter of cases). In Latgale, respondents rated their Latvian language proficiency as the weakest. This region does not have a suitable language environment, as people study Latvian only at school, but in practice there is often no opportunity to speak Latvian. The 2011 Latvian National Census also indicates that Latgale is the region where Latvian is spoken the least; for example, the home language is most often Russian (60.3%)

Latvian language  
acquisition by age group

Latvian language  
acquisition by region

**How long ago did  
respondents begin to  
learn Latvian?**

57% of the respondents began learning Latvian before 1991, a third during the period between 1991 and 2004, but only one tenth after 2004 (Figure 33). Most older respondents had already begun to learn Latvian before 1991 and approximately 20% did so after 1991. Analyzing these statistics, it is important to note that individuals who have learned Latvian after 2004 have done so much more often not only in a formal context – at school or in courses – but also as a result of informal communication – by interacting with friends (56.1% compared with 39.3% of those who learned Latvian before 1991) as well as from Latvian mass media (53.7% compared with 36% of those who learned Latvian before 1991). This testifies to the increase in motivation of integrative language acquisition, i.e., the wish to learn Latvian not only for use at work, but also for use in everyday life as a part of living in and belonging to society.

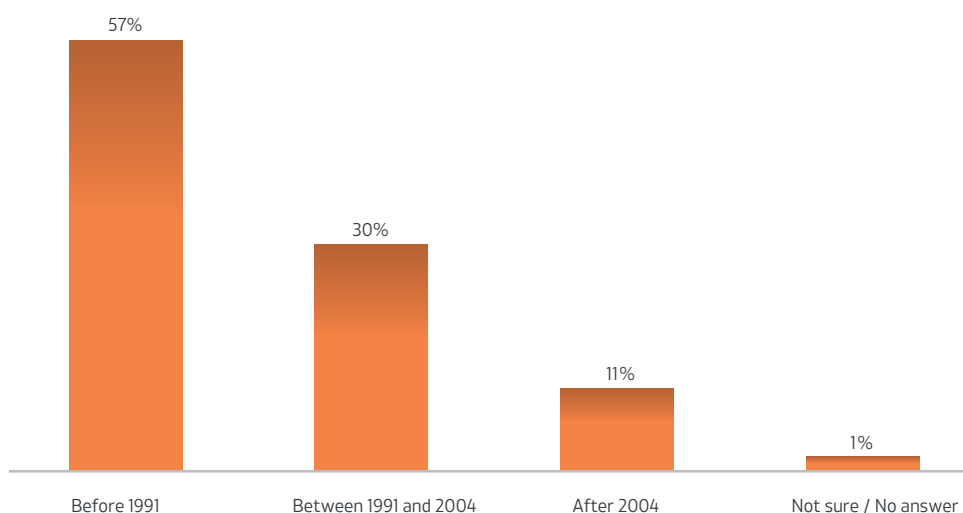


Figure 33. Respondents' answers to the question regarding the time period during which they began learning Latvian. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

**The State Language Proficiency Examination (Valsts valodas prasmes pārbaude)**

According to the 2014 LVA Survey, 50% of respondents had passed the State Language Proficiency Examination (Valsts valodas prasmes pārbaude – VVPP). The most common proficiency level result for the VVPP exam was C2<sup>10</sup> (23%), B2 (15%), B1 (15%), C1 (12%) (26% of respondents did not answer this question). 70% of those who received a C2 or C1 level felt that they could speak Latvian well or very well.

<sup>10</sup> For language proficiency levels and proficiency descriptions, see the homepage of the National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia (Valsts izglītības satura centrs – VISC) under State language proficiency levels (Valsts valodas prasmes līmeņi – available only in Latvian), at: <http://visc.gov.lv/valval/limeni.shtml>

Compared with statistics from previous years, during the period at the focus of this study, the middle (B) level of Latvian language proficiency increased among those who passed the examination (Table 12). 2011 was the first year when the proportion of those who received a basic (A) level of proficiency was less than that of those receiving a medium (B) level of proficiency. It can be concluded that in recent years the proficiency of those taking the VVPP exam has improved. The large number of individuals taking the exam in 2010 can be explained by the economic crisis, and in 2009 this was due to changes to regulations adopted by the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers in which a minimum level of language proficiency was set for every profession (MK noteikumi 2009). Statistics also show that the majority of those who take the VVPP exam are unemployed (e.g., 64.8% in 2014). In 2014, 95.3% of those taking the VVPP exam indicated that they were taking the exam for professional reasons or to fulfill a requirement for work, 4.2% in order to receive a permanent residence permit, 0.5% in order to receive the status of a European Union long-term resident (Valsts izglītības satura centrs 2014, 4). The VVPP exam is primarily taken by people of working age between ages 31 and 50 (46.9% in 2014) and between ages 51 and 60 (27.4% in 2014).

| Year | Number of individual taking exam | Passed exam |       |       | Did not pass exam |
|------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------------------|
|      |                                  | A           | B     | C     |                   |
| 2010 | 10645                            | 36.7%       | 31.9% | 15.1% | 16.3%             |
| 2011 | 6566                             | 29.4%       | 36.5% | 17.1% | 17%               |
| 2012 | 6880                             | 30%         | 36.2% | 17.3% | 21.7%             |
| 2013 | 9625                             | 28%         | 33.9% | 16.5% | 21.5%             |
| 2014 | 6416                             | 30.7%       | 29.8% | 17.8% | 16.5%             |
| 2015 | 5817                             | 34%         | 27%   | 13%   | 26%               |

Table 12. Results of the State Language Proficiency Examination (Valsts valodas prasmes pārbaude – VVPP) between 2012-2015 Statistics: National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia (Valsts izglītības satura centrs) 2014

The 2014 LVA Survey shows that 41% of respondents passed the state centralized Latvian language examination (Valsts centralizētais eksāmens latviešu valodā) at school. For respondents ages 15-24, more than 80% passed the state centralized Latvian language examination. Those surveyed most often received either a B level (31%) or an A level (18%) in the state centralized examination; it should be noted that 40% of respondents did not answer this question. The cen-

**The centralized Latvian language examination**

tralized examination results generally correspond to self-assessment of language proficiency; 71% of those who passed the centralized examination at the highest level felt that they could speak Latvian well or very well.

### Further development of Latvian language proficiency

Approximately half (53%) of ethnic minority respondents to the LVA Survey 2014 stated that they were not currently developing their Latvian language proficiency further, and also were not currently planning on developing it further in the future (Figure 34). Approximately a quarter (28%) were currently developing their Latvian language proficiency further and also planned to continue to do so. Young people (aged 15-24) responded that they were most likely currently developing and planning on continuing to develop their Latvian language proficiency, while approximately half of the members of the oldest generation surveyed were not further developing their Latvian language proficiency and were also not planning on doing so. Further development of Latvian language proficiency is not associated with self-assessment of proficiency and approximately half of those surveyed did not wish to further develop their Latvian language proficiency, while approximately a quarter were doing so and planned on continuing to do so.

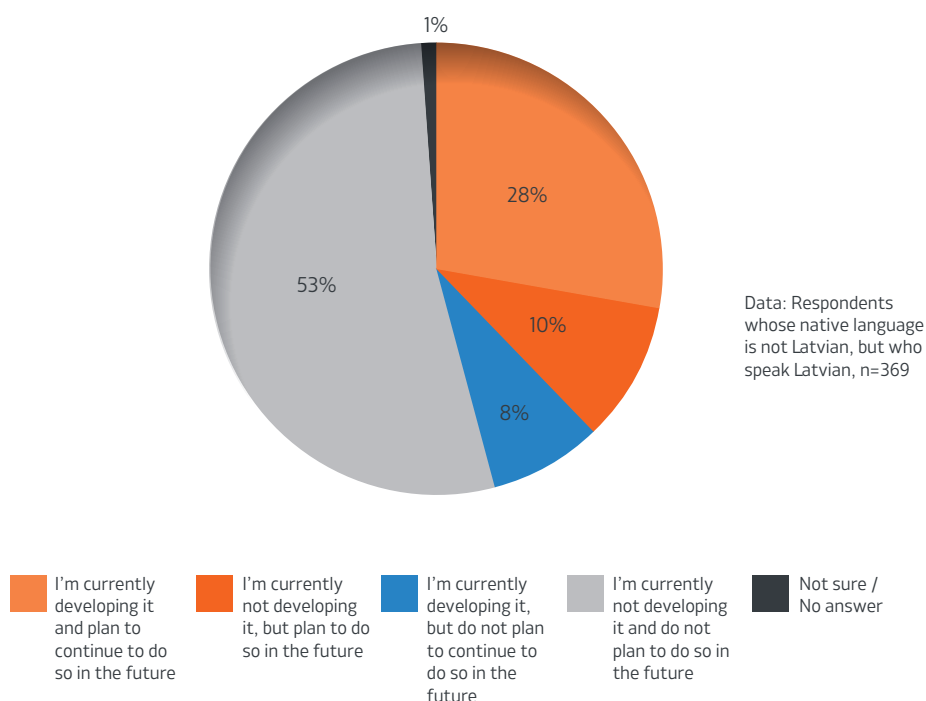


Figure 34. Further development of Latvian language proficiency. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

Those wishing to further develop their Latvian language felt that this had to be done because, first of all, it is necessary for work or in finding work (32%, approximately a third of respondents in 2012 also stated that they wished to further develop their Latvian language proficiency, because it is necessary for work or in finding work); secondly, Latvian proficiency was considered important because it is necessary for communication (23%, this was most often stated by respondents aged 55-74, especially pensioners and those receiving disability pensions). Respondents also indicated that Latvian language proficiency needed to be further developed in order to speak Latvian better and to thus feel better (23%; 33% in 2012). The necessity of speaking Latvian as a result of living in Latvia was also mentioned (17%, this reason was mentioned most by young people aged 15-24, especially students; this reason was mentioned the least in the language environments where Latvian is spoken the least: Rīga and Latgale) (2014 LVA Survey).

The respondents who did not plan on further developing their Latvian language proficiency most often explained this by stating that it was not necessary for them (44%) and that their language proficiency was sufficient (40%, this was a view held more often by younger people (aged 15 between and 44) whose language proficiency was better than that of older people; the former is also the group who most often self-assess their Latvian language proficiency as very good or good). More rarely, age (9%) and lack of time (7%) are given as reasons. Approximately one-half of those who feel that they speak Latvian at a basic or medium level indicated that they are not further developing their Latvian language proficiency, because they feel they have no need for doing so. This indicates that the language environment often does not motivate individuals to improve their Latvian language proficiency (2014 LVA Survey).

Those respondents who did not speak Latvian stated that they would definitely study, or were more likely like to study, Latvian on language courses (69%, also 66% in 2012) as well as by interacting with friends (56%), accessing mass media (53%), and speaking Latvian on the street, in shops, and in other social situations (50%). The lowest levels of interest among respondents were in taking part in private lessons (69% didn't want to use this opportunity) or developing their proficiency through self-study (61%) (2014 LVA Survey).

37% of respondents to the 2014 LVA Survey indicated that in learning Latvian or further developing their proficiency, they had not encountered problems or difficulties (mostly these were respondents who spoke Latvian very well or well); this figure was 42% in 2012 (Figure 35). However, 22% of respondents stated that the grammar of Latvian gave them difficulty, while 12% of respondents indicated that they had specific difficulty in using the diacritical marks used for marking vowel length.

**Motivations for further development of Latvian language proficiency**

**Selection of Latvian language learning methods**

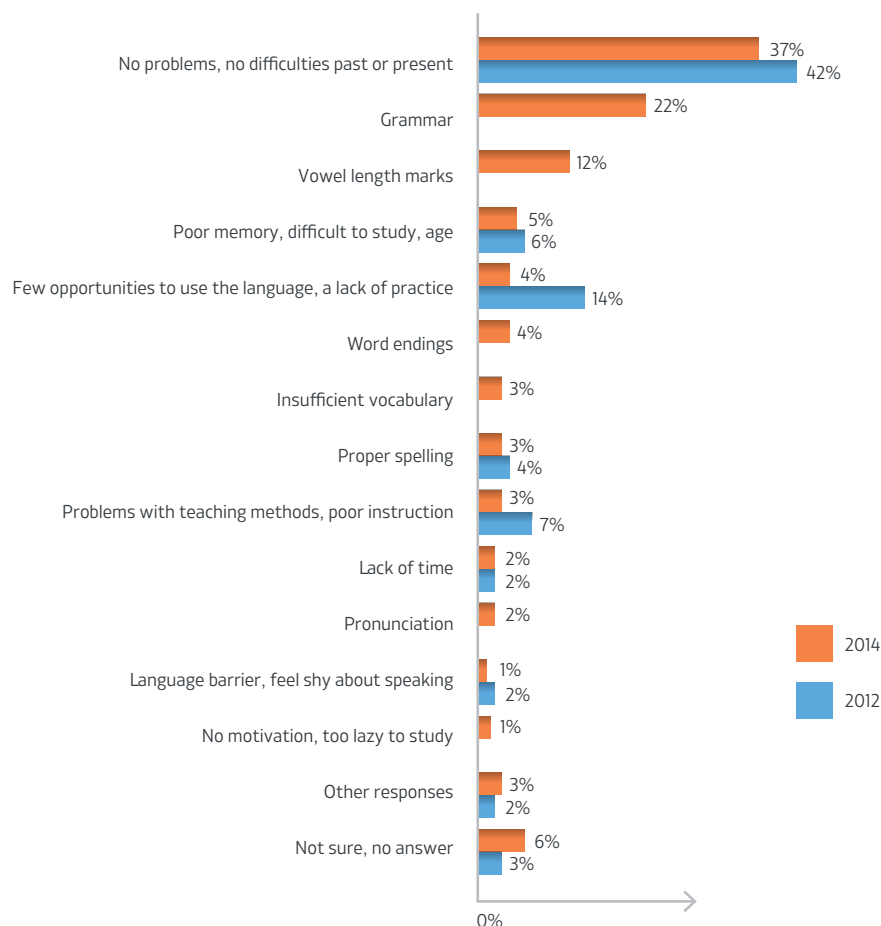


Figure 35. Difficulties in Latvian language acquisition and further developing proficiency. Native language of respondents: Russian. Statistics: 2012 and 2014 LVA Surveys

To the question about what difficulties members of ethnic minorities might encounter in learning Latvian, those whose native language was Latvian mainly answered that the reason was either laziness or a lack of desire to learn Latvian (37%; this figure was 46% in 2012). The older the respondents, the more likely they were to feel that precisely these reasons were to blame; however, the proportion of those thinking this way decreased by approximately 10% over the last two years. The younger the respondents, the more likely they were to state that for people learning Latvian, grammar (15%) and the complexity of Latvian (7%) are sources of difficulty.

That the position of Latvian has stabilized. This is shown, for example, by the fact that a majority of new immigrants gladly study Latvian. The survey in the 2015 study *A portrait of third-country nationals in Latvia (Trešo valstu pilsoņu portrets Latvijā)* by the Society Integration Foundation (Sabiedrība integrācijās

Latvian language acquisition among migrants – trends during recent years

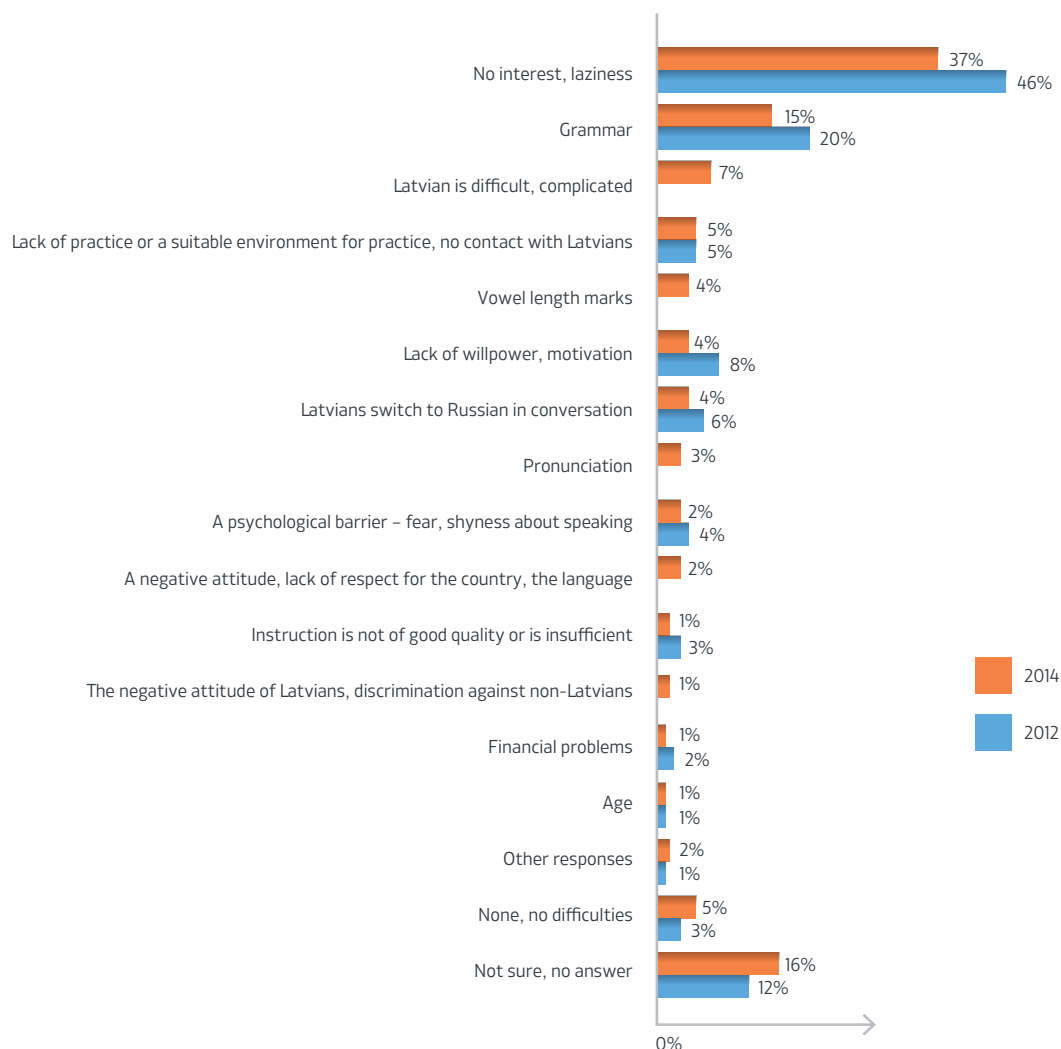


Figure 36. Difficulties in Latvian language acquisition and further development of proficiency; the Latvian view of members of the ethnic minority communities. Statistics: 2012 and 2014 LVA Surveys

fonds) shows that in 2015, 83.5% of survey third-country nationals (most having lived in Latvia for less than five years) had studied Latvian, and almost all would wish to continue doing so. In 2009, 54.9% of third-country nationals wished to study Latvian, while in 2015, a total of 89.1% wished to study Latvian (Kļave, Šūpule, Zepa 2015, 41). The surveyed third-country nationals stated that they wished Latvian language courses were available without cost and that they could be taught continuously throughout the year. As the respondents were motivated to learn, they emphasized the need to practice the language they had learned in its natural environment and paid attention to the need to speak more in Latvian with Latvians and avoid switching instead to Russian or English in conversation.

## 2.6. Latvian and foreign languages in the education system

### The language of instruction in preschools

Approximately, three quarters of preschool-aged children are in preschools that use Latvian as the language of instruction and, therefore, approximately one quarter are in preschools which implement the ethnic minority educational program (Table 13). During the period of this study, every year an increasing number of preschool-aged children attended preschools that use Latvian as the language of instruction and a decreasing number attended institutions which implement the ethnic minority educational program.

| Number of children attending                                                                                         | in 2010 | in 2014 |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|-------|
| Preschools with Latvian as the language of instruction                                                               | 75%     | 76.8%   | +1.8% |
| Preschools implementing the ethnic minority education program (i.e., Russian is used as the language of instruction) | 24.5%   | 22.6%   | -1.9% |
| A language of instruction is used which is not Latvian or Russian                                                    | 0.5%    | 0.6%    | +0.1% |

Table 13. The language of instruction in preschools as of September 1. Statistics: CSP

### Latvian as part of games and play

The guidelines for preschool education are defined in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 533 – Regulations regarding national preschool education guidelines (Noteikumi par valsts pirmsskolas izglītības vadlīnijām). These guidelines specify that the content of education must be acquired as part of educational content or within integrated school subjects thereby ensuring continuity between the content of preschool and primary education. In order to ensure mastery of the educational content, the ethnic minority language is used (language development and orientation in the surroundings, development of conversational abilities in the child's native language, learning about literature and folklore, development of both reading and writing ability as part of teaching literacy) and also Latvian (developing conversational ability in Latvian for communication). With regard to Latvian language acquisition in preschools, the regulations specify that the Latvian language educational program must be designed so that children learn the basics of conversational language and language use relevant in everyday life. The guidelines specify that Latvian language acquisition as part of games and play must be planned for children aged 2-5 no less frequently than twice a week and for children aged 5 and older this must be every day.

Taking into account the necessity of learning Latvian and the children's age, 47% of Latvians and 33% of ethnic minority respondents (2014 LVA Survey) felt that ethnic minority schoolchildren should start studying all subjects in Latvian

in preschool and, respectively, 32% and 28% of respondents felt the same for children beginning in Grades 1-4, while approximately one tenth felt this for children beginning in Grades 5-9. Approximately one fifth of ethnic minority respondents were not able to give a concrete response. Taking these statistics into account, it should be noted that independent of the respondents' age, gender, position, level of education, or level of Latvian language proficiency, they gave very similar responses in support of Latvian language learning beginning at as early an age as possible, which may indicate that this view and belief is becoming accepted across all of society. Placing these statistics next to those describing the language proficiency of young people – which is better than that of members of older generations – it can be seen that society's views regarding the positive benefits of language acquisition at an early age continue to consolidate. Language acquisition in schools and in the educational system is the best way to achieve effective results.

### **The language of instruction at comprehensive schools**

In Latvia in 2014/2015, there were 824 comprehensive schools, of which 109 implemented the ethnic minority education program. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, IZM), state-financed ethnic minority education is implemented in 99 schools in Latvian and Russian, in 4 schools in Latvian and Polish, in 2 schools in Latvian and Hebrew, in 1 school in Latvian and Ukrainian, in 1 school in Latvian and Lithuanian, in 1 school in Latvian and Estonian, and in 1 school in Latvian and Belarusian. In addition, 75 educational institutions implement education in both Latvian and according to the ethnic minority education program, as well as two private educational institutions, which implement their general education program in English, and one in French. 20.4% of all of Latvia's schoolchildren studied in schools implementing the ethnic minority education program in 2014; the number of schoolchildren in ethnic minority schools continues to decrease (the proportion of all schoolchildren in Latvia studying in ethnic minority schools was 27% in 2010 and 33% in 1999) (IZM 2014) for demographic reasons as well as due to the fact that a somewhat significant proportion of the members of ethnic minority communities choose to send their children to schools with Latvian as the language of instruction specifically in order to ensure that they learn Latvian at a good level. The statistics from the 2014 LVA Survey show that the children of half of the ethnic minority respondents (49.5%) are studying or have studied in schools with Latvian as the language of instruction.

The standards for basic education were established in 2013 by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 530 – Regulations for national basic education standards, basic education subject standards, and basic education program examples (Noteikumi par valsts pamatizglītības standartu, pamatizglītības mācību priekšmetu standartiem un pamatizglītības programmu paraugiem). Ethnic minority educational institutions can choose one of the school subject and lesson plan models of the basic education program.

**School subjects and curriculum in ethnic minority educational institutions**

**Model 1:** Recommended for schoolchildren who received their preschool education in Latvian and who have Latvian language proficiency and experience in using Latvian. According to IZM statistics, in 2014, 5% of schools implementing the ethnic minority education program utilized this model.

**Model 2:** Recommended for schoolchildren who received their preschool education in an ethnic minority language and who have conversational Latvian language proficiency and experience using Latvian. According to IZM statistics, in 2014, 41.6% of schools implementing the ethnic minority education program utilized this model.

**Model 3:** Recommended for schoolchildren who have received their preschool education in an ethnic minority language who have conversational Latvian language proficiency, but do not have experience using Latvian. According to IZM statistics, in 2014, 34.8% of schools implementing the minority education program utilized this model.

**Model 4:** Recommended for schoolchildren who do not have previous knowledge of Latvian. According to IZM statistics, in 2014, 5.6% of schools implementing the ethnic minority education program utilized this model.

**Model 5:** Recommended for schoolchildren who have Latvian language proficiency, but who wish to learn more deeply about their ethnic culture. According to IZM statistics, in 2014, 13% of schools implementing the ethnic minority education program utilized this model.

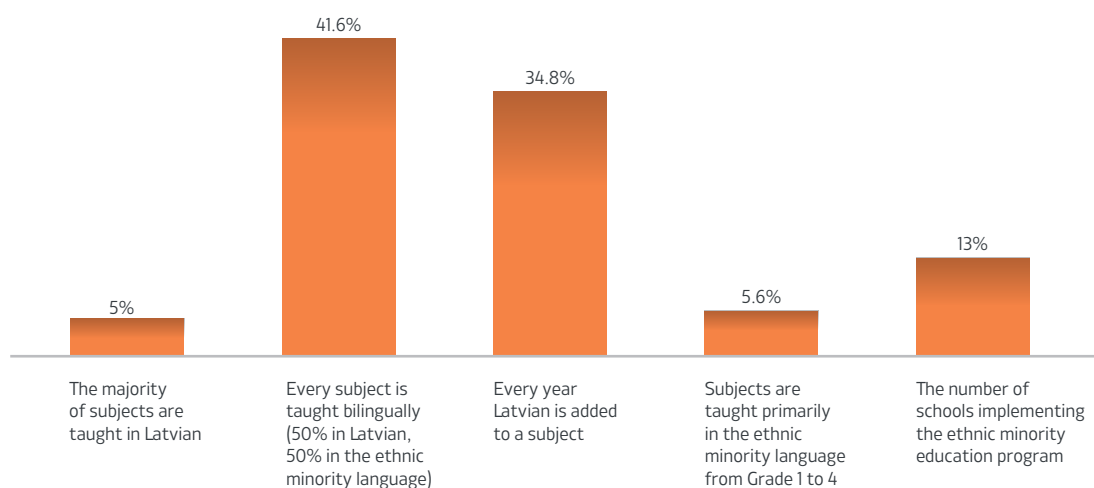


Figure 37: Ethnic minority education programs in Latvian in 2014. Statistics: IZM 2014

According to Education and Science Ministry statistics, almost all schoolchildren in the regions of Kurzeme, Vidzeme, and Zemgale study in institutions using Latvian as the medium of instruction, in the regions of Rīga and Latgale approximately 9% and 22%, respectively, study in institutions implementing a (Russian) ethnic minority program (Figure 38). Very few schoolchildren study using other ethnic minority languages as the medium of instruction. In the larger cities, the largest number of schoolchildren study bilingually (in Russian and Latvian) in Daugavpils (78%), Rīga (50%), and Rēzekne (46%); other ethnic minority languages are used the most in Rēzekne (12%) and Jūrmala (6%).

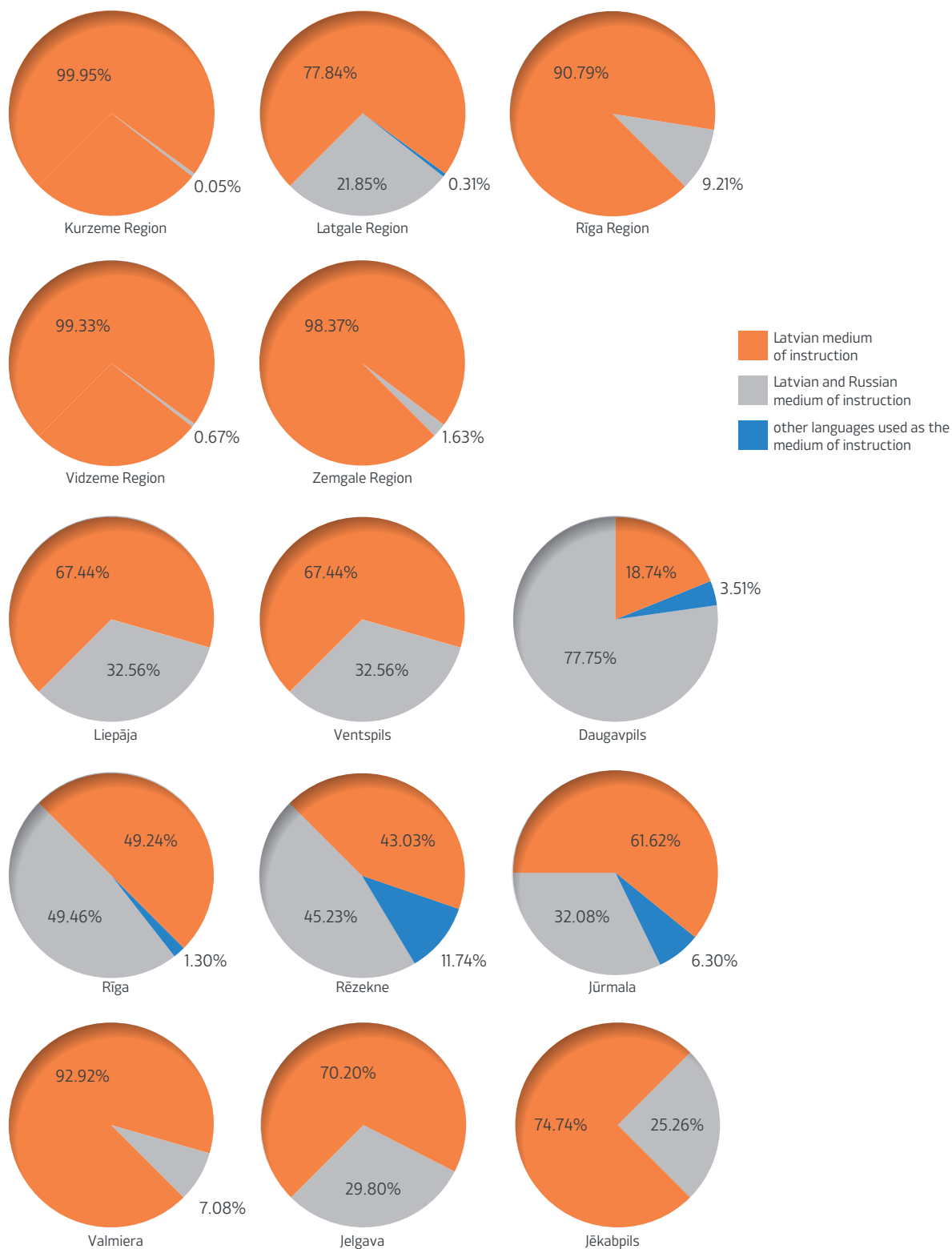


Figure 38. Students divided by the language used as the medium of instruction in comprehensive daytime education programs in Latvia's regions and largest cities. Statistics: IZM 2014

**Unified national standards  
for acquisition of  
educational content**

The general secondary education standard is specified in the May 21, 2013 Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 281 – Regulations concerning the national general secondary education standard, school subject standards, and education program examples (Noteikumi par valsts vispārējās vidējās izglītības standartu, mācību priekšmetu standartiem un izglītības programmu paraugiem). No fewer than five school subjects are taught in Latvian during each school year in the ethnic minority education programs, and Latvian language and literature are not counted among these. Up to two fifths of all educational content may be taught in the ethnic minority language during the school year.

Educational content in all educational institutions in Latvia is taught in accordance with unified national standards for all educational institutions; however, until 2009, the content of the Latvian language and literature courses differed between ethnic minority (bilingual education) schools and schools using Latvian as the medium of instruction. The first unified centralized Latvian language exam for high school students was administered in 2012 (although before then the two different parts of the exam were already similar) with its program and content being the same for students attending schools with Latvian as the medium of instruction and schools implementing the ethnic minority education program. To prepare for this event, studies as well as trials and tests were conducted. After the exam, VISC gathered together the exam results with the goal of determining whether all high school students in every school in Latvia had acquired the program completely and were able to pass the exam. The analysis of the exam results showed that the requirements of the exam match the stated goals and that the greatest problems in getting a good result had been among professional and night school graduates.

**The results of the state  
centralized examinations**

The state centralized exam results indicate that assessments are similar in educational institutions with Latvian as the medium of instruction as well as those implementing the ethnic minority education program. The results in science-related school subjects for ethnic minority school students (in 2013) – in physics and math – were higher than in schools with Latvian as the medium of instruction (VISC statistics) and in the Latvian language exam the overall results for students from ethnic minority schools were only slightly lower than for students from schools with Latvian as the medium of instruction. However, ethnic minority students who received their secondary education in a school with Latvian as the medium of instruction have Latvian language proficiency that is somewhat higher than those who continued to attend schools implementing the ethnic minority educational program.

The LVA survey results regarding the self-assessment by young people of their Latvian language proficiency, as well as the centralized exam results (VISC statistics), appear to show that implementing Latvian as the language of instruction for school subjects and as the working language for state exams has ensured Latvian language acquisition without lowering students' educational achievement.

## Latvian language acquisition in school: experience and evaluation by respondents

Approximately a quarter of respondents to the 2014 LVA Survey were children who had studied in comprehensive schools or had graduated from school within the last three years. Of these, 80% of respondents were children who were studying or had studied in schools with Latvian as the medium of instruction, and 22% were children who were studying or had studied in schools implementing the ethnic minority education program (most often these respondents lived in Rīga and Latgale). The children of 50% of respondents whose native language was not Latvian were studying or had studied in schools with Latvian as the medium of instruction, while 46% were studying or had studied in schools implementing the ethnic minority education program. At the same time, in the Latvian target group, one tenth of respondents had children who were studying or had studied in schools implementing the ethnic minority education program (Figure 39).

Compared with 2012, the children of an increasing number of respondents whose native language was not Latvian were studying or had studied in schools using Latvian as the medium of instruction (36% in 2012, 50% in 2014) and a decreasing amount in schools implementing the ethnic minority education program (67% in 2012, 44% in 2014).

Half of the children of ethnic minority respondents attend Latvian-medium schools

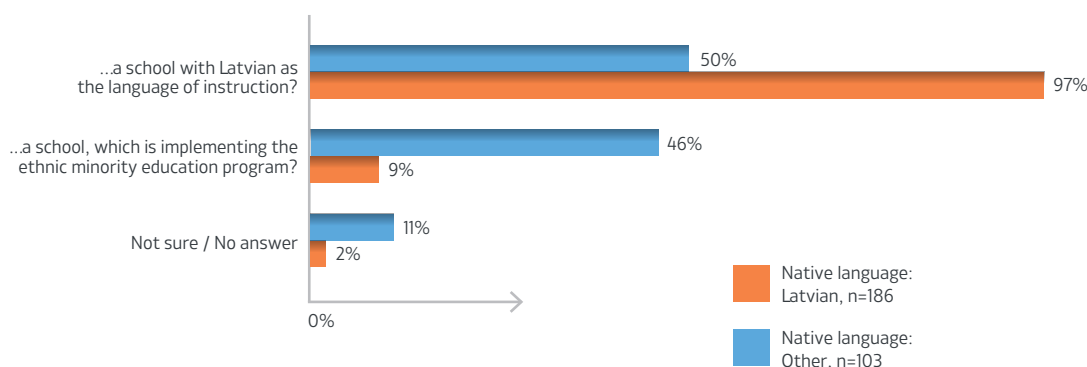
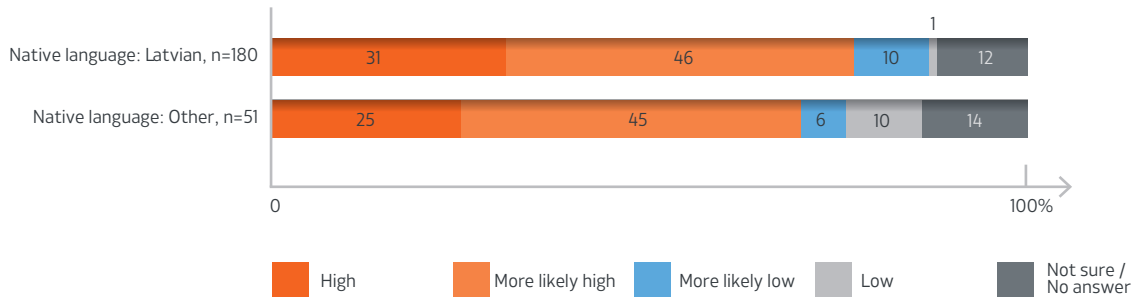


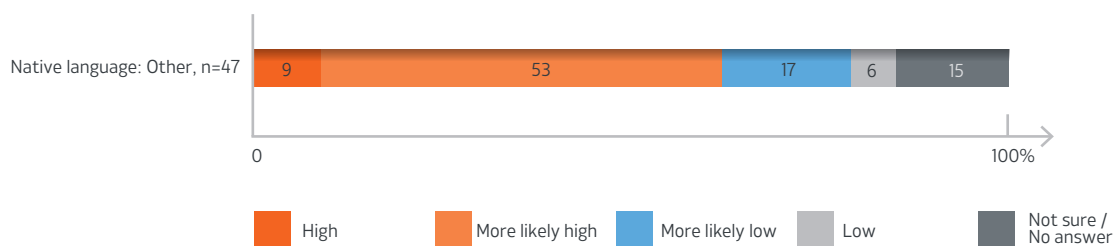
Figure 39. Educational institutions in which the children of respondents were currently studying or from which they had graduated within the last three years. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

The majority of respondents whose native language was Latvian (77%) or a language other than Latvian (70%), and whose children were studying in schools with Latvian as the medium of instruction, gave a positive evaluation of the quality of Latvian language instruction. The quality of Latvian language instruction was rated slightly more critically, though still positively overall, in ethnic minority schools, with 62% of ethnic minority respondents giving a positive evaluation (Figure 41).



Data: Respondents whose children study or have studied at a school with Latvian used as the medium of instruction

Figure 40. Evaluation of the quality of Latvian language instruction in schools utilizing Latvian as the medium of instruction. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey



Data: Respondents whose children study or have studied at a school with Latvian used as the medium of instruction, 'n=' see image.

Figure 41. Evaluation of the quality of Latvian language instruction in schools implementing the ethnic minority education program. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

## Motivations for Latvian language acquisition among children

The question of why children must learn Latvian shows the subjective attitude of respondents towards Latvian and these answers are especially important from the perspective of ideology and societal integration. In addition, this was an open question presented without a choice of possible responses and, therefore, respondents had to formulate their responses on their own (Figure 42). The largest proportion of respondents answered that Latvian must be known, because they live in Latvia (this is the opinion of 43% of all respondents: 47% of members of ethnic minorities, 40% of respondents with Latvian as their native language; this response was given most often by respondents aged 35-44) or that it is the state (official, fundamental) language (32% of all respondents; 34% of respondents with Latvian as their native language, 30% of respondents with a different native language; this response was given most often by respondents aged 15-34). Other responses included the fact that Latvian was their native language (9%) and pointed to the fact that it would be easier to communicate (8%: 10% of respondents with a different native language, 7% of respondents with Latvian as their native language; this answer was also given somewhat more frequently by members of younger age groups).

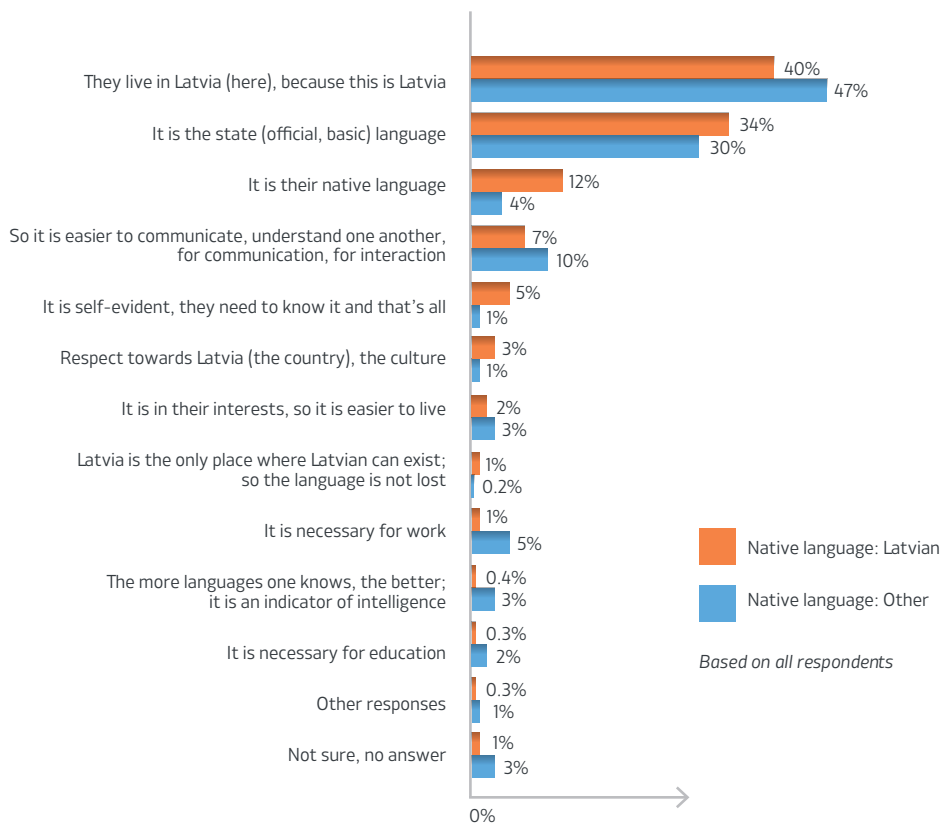


Figure 42. Responses by respondents to the question “Why do children in Latvia need to learn Latvian?”  
Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

### Foreign language acquisition in schools: experience and assessment by respondents

During the period of this study, the majority of students studied English: in 2010/2011, 82.2% studied English, but in 2014/2015, 91.2% studied English (Table 14). The second most popular foreign language was Russian; however, the number of those learning Russian is slowly decreasing: in 2010/2011, 35.7% studied Russian, but in 2014/2015, 32.3% studied Russian. The proportion of those studying German is also slowly decreasing: in 2010/2011, 11.9% of Latvia's students studied German, but in 2014/2015, 10.9% studied German. The proportion of those studying other languages has not changed appreciably (CSP statistics).

| Students who are studying ... | 2010/2011 Academic Year | 2014/2015 Academic Year |       |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| English                       | 82.2%                   | 91.2%                   | +9%   |
| Russian                       | 35.7%                   | 32.3%                   | -3.4% |
| German                        | 11.9%                   | 10.9%                   | -1%   |
| French                        | 1.9%                    | 2.2%                    | +0.3% |
| Other languages               | 0.7%                    | 1.1%                    | +0.4% |

Table 14. Foreign language acquisition in comprehensive schools at the beginning of the academic year. Statistics: CSP

In high school, nearly all students (98-99%) were studying English, a little more than half of students were studying Russian (57-58%), and approximately a quarter of students were studying German (Table 15). The proportion of students studying German in high school decreased the most rapidly during the period of this study: from 30% in 2010/2011 to 27% in 2014/2015.

| Students who are studying ... | 2010/2011 Academic Year | 2014/2015 Academic Year |       |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| English                       | 98.6%                   | 98.3%                   | -0.3% |
| Russian                       | 57.7%                   | 57.3%                   | -0.4% |
| German                        | 30.1%                   | 26.6%                   | -3.5% |
| French                        | 5.1%                    | 6.2%                    | +1.1% |

Table 15. Foreign language acquisition in Grades 10-12 in comprehensive schools at the beginning of the academic year. Statistics: CSP

Among comprehensive school students in Grades 1-9, the greatest proportion were also studying English and this proportion rapidly increased during the period of this study (77% in 2010/2011, 90% in 2014/2015). Approximately a quarter of students in Grades 1-9 were studying Russian, while 6-7% were studying German (Table 16).

| Students who are studying ... | 2010/2011 Academic Year | 2014/2015 Academic Year |        |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|
| English                       | 77.1%                   | 89.7%                   | +12.6% |
| Russian                       | 28.9%                   | 26.8%                   | -2.1%  |
| German                        | 6.2%                    | 7.4%                    | -1.2%  |
| French                        | 0.9%                    | 1.4%                    | +0.5%  |

Table 16. Foreign language acquisition in Grades 1-9 in comprehensive schools at the beginning of the academic year. Statistics: CSP

Approximately half of students were studying one foreign language, approximately 40% were studying two, and 3% were studying three (Table 17). As English language study begins in Grade 1, as of 2014, the proportion of students who were not studying any foreign language at all decreased during the period of this study.

| Number of languages being studied  | 2010/2011 Academic Year | 2014/2015 Academic Year |        |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|
| 1                                  | 39.3%                   | 50.4%                   | +11.1% |
| 2                                  | 40.8%                   | 39.9%                   | -0.9%  |
| 3                                  | 3%                      | 2.5%                    | -0.5%  |
| not studying any foreign languages | 16.9%                   | 7.2%                    | -9.7%  |

Table 17. Foreign language acquisition in comprehensive schools divided by number of languages being studied in the 2014/2015 academic year. Statistics: CSP

Along with the most popular languages, students were also studying Arabic, Danish, Estonian, Italian, Hebrew, Japanese, Chinese, Latin, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Finnish, Spanish, and Swedish.

The absolute majority of respondents to the 2014 LVA Survey felt that in school children needed to learn Latvian (98%), English (94%), and Russian (90%). A third of respondents also felt that German should be learned in school and approximately 14% felt that French should be learned (Figure 43).

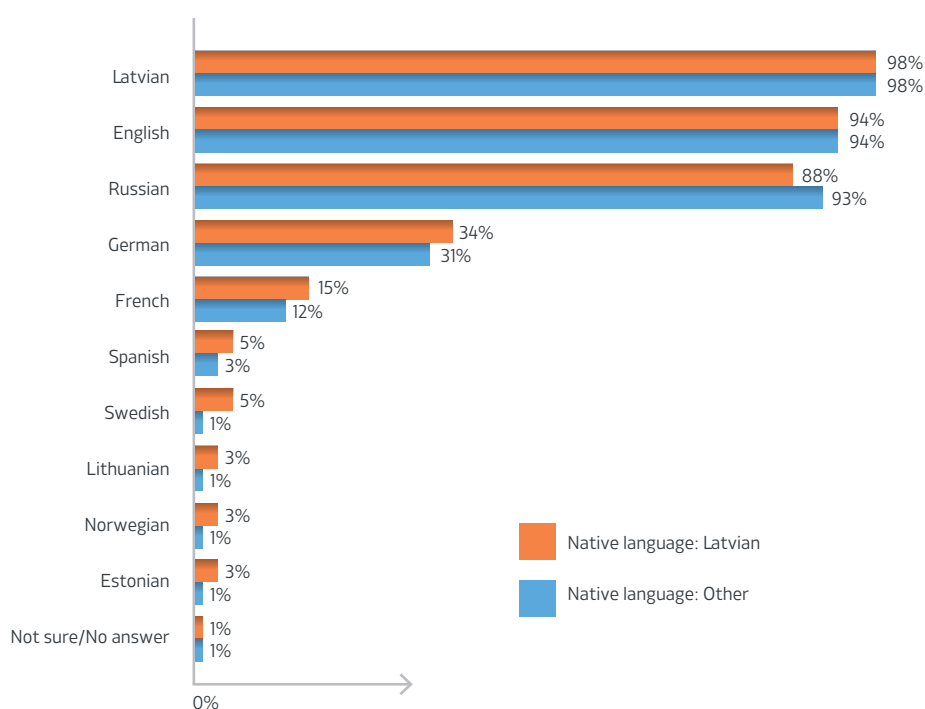


Figure 43. Languages which, in the opinion of the respondents, should be learned by children in school. Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

## 2.7. Trends in the language proficiency of Latvia's residents

### Trends in Latvian language proficiency

Analyzing the language proficiency of Latvia's residents, it can be concluded that Latvian language proficiency and its level continue to increase, especially among younger generations. Taking into account the widespread distribution of Russian in Latvia's linguistic environment, in all studies of the language situation, special attention is given to the competition between Latvian and Russian. When conducting the previous language situation analysis (Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011, 39), it was concluded that in comparing the proportion of speakers of Latvian and Russian, the situation favored Russian (92% spoke Latvian, 98% spoke Russian), although statistics from the 2009 survey already indicated that this relationship had changed among young people (aged 17-25); there are more speakers of Latvian than Russian among young people. The 2014 LVA Survey statistics show a similar situation; overall, the number of people speaking Russian is large, but the proportion of those stating that they speak Russian well or very well continues to decrease. The number of Latvian speakers, it seems, has reached its maximum extent at approximately 90% of all residents (this amount has not significantly changed for several years, which may mean that the remainder is either not reachable or that Latvian knowledge is not necessary for them, especially taking into account the positive tendencies among younger people). Among Latvia's young people (aged 15-24) Latvian is more widespread than Russian and, according to their self-assessment, their level of Latvian language proficiency is considerably higher than that of their Russian language proficiency. 87.3% of Latvia's young people aged 15-24 say that they speak Latvian very well or well, but 58.5% say the same about their Russian language proficiency. This indicates the strengthening of the position of Latvian and the results accomplished by the education system.

### Languages in the job market

According to the statistics of the 2014 LVA Survey, individuals of retirement or pre-retirement age, as well as the unemployed and laborers, are those who give the weakest assessment of their Latvian language proficiency. Therefore, a large proportion of the individuals who do not speak Latvian sufficient to the requirements of society and the job market are individuals of retirement or pre-retirement age who currently, or soon, will no longer participate in the job market. The highest evaluation for Latvian language proficiency is given by individuals with post-secondary education, managers, specialists, stay-at-home mothers (also those on maternity leave), students, as well as the self-employed, businesspeople, and farmers. Therefore, individuals with better Latvian language proficiency are characterized by better education and higher social status. The highest evaluation for Russian language proficiency is given by the unemployed, laborers, and housewives, as well as people with higher education, managers, specialists, and businesspeople. This indicates that currently in Latvia's job market, including for management positions, good Latvian and Russian language proficiency is neces-

sary, as well as being so for the overall quality of an individual's education and degree of competitiveness.

In addition to age and social status, Latvian language proficiency is influenced by the linguistic environment. There are significantly fewer Latvian residents and a larger number of ethnic minority residents in Latgale and Rīga than in the rest of Latvia, therefore, it is logical that in this environment Latvian language proficiency is less widespread than in the rest of the country. However, even in these regions more than 90% of residents have at least basic proficiency in Latvian: 92.4% in Latgale and 95.2% in Rīga. Differences become evident in self-assessment: in Latgale and Rīga members of ethnic minorities have fewer opportunities or less of a necessity to communicate in Latvian and for these reasons they also assess their Latvian language proficiency at a lower level. In Latgale, only half of residents (55.4%) feel that they speak Latvian very well or well; in Rīga, 71.5% state the same.

A large proportion of Russian speakers also speak and use Latvian. At the same time, Latvians use Russian in various circumstances fairly often. This means that in terms of linguistic practice, both groups in Latvia are bilingual. A good level of Latvian and Russian language proficiency are maintained in Latvia's society, and this is at least partially due to the relations between Latvians and members of ethnic minorities, as well as due to integration. A University of Tallinn study *Ethnolinguistic Vitality and Formation of Identity: Estonia as compared to the other Baltic countries* (2008-2011) concludes that in Latvia both Latvians and members of ethnic minorities speak both Latvian and Russian with their friends. In Latvia, 45% of Russian speakers and 40% of Latvian speakers communicate with their friends in two languages, which is twice as many as in Estonia, where the overall sociolinguistic situation is similar to Latvia. Also in other domains (at work, in shops, and so on) both Russian and official language of state are used more often in Latvia than in Estonia and Lithuania. Taken together, the study concludes that in comparison with Estonia and Lithuania, Latvia is characterized by less linguistic segregation and greater linguistic integration. Latvia's situation stands in contrast with Estonia's, where Estonians and members of ethnic minorities live in territorially separate areas, and also with Lithuania, where there are very few Russian speakers who conform to the dominant part of Lithuania's society, which is relatively monolingual and essentially based on ethnicity. The study emphasizes that in Latvia there are good preconditions for the formation of a common civic identity and that agreement could be reached on questions relating to the legitimacy of the interethnic situation and cultural values (Ehala 2014, 23-32). The study also shows that what disrupts communication between Latvians and members of ethnic minorities is not language proficiency but a lack of trust, which is higher in Latvia than in Estonia or Lithuania. The high level of mutual mistrust between Latvians and members of ethnic minorities is explained by the fact that at the end of the Soviet period, Latvians felt their identity to be endangered to a large degree, and after this time the official state atti-

Obstacles  
to communication

Latvian language  
proficiency as an indicator  
of integration

**Increased English use**

tude towards state language (i.e., Latvian language) use has been very strict. In terms of normative acts, Estonia has been more lenient and so, possibly, for this reason the level of mistrust among Russian speakers in Latvia is higher than that among Russian speakers in Estonia (Ehala 2014, 23–32).

Changes can also be seen in the proficiency of Latvia's residents in various foreign languages. Currently, these changes favor English, which presently, due to its international role, is slowly becoming not just a foreign language where proficiency is based on individual choice, but one which functions as a basic skill for modern-day people and exists alongside other abilities, such as computer literacy, in many societies. Although English language proficiency is not yet at a high level in all of society, the situation among young people points to trends and further development. Young people evaluate their English language proficiency at a higher level than their Russian language proficiency. English language acquisition is also helped by schools. To a certain extent this is a reason for the decrease in the proportion and quality of foreign language proficiency. In Latvia, the traditionally popular German language, and also the French language, are being studied at a decreasing rate, which is not a positive trend when viewed in the context of the EU's goal of multilingualism (where every individual in addition to their native language also speaks two additional foreign languages) (*Valodas politika ES* 2015). This means that in Latvia it is necessary to promote – and, with the assistance of the education system, also help to achieve – the study of various different foreign languages. Still, it is positive that among Latvia's young people the proficiency in other languages which are more rarely studied in Latvia has grown, but these are not mentioned due to the limited scope of the 2014 LVA Survey (7% of those surveyed aged 15–27 indicated that they had basic knowledge of some other language).

Evaluating the role of various languages and the indispensable nature of proficiency in these languages in Latvia, respondents indicated that in Latvia, proficiency in Latvian is most important. This is a significant indicator marking that the integrative role of Latvian has been secured. The stabilization of the popularity of proficiency in various languages and an axiomatic perception of Latvian language proficiency as well as positive results in Latvian language proficiency among members of the youth target group indicate that attainment of at least a few of the goals set out as part of language policy are being approached.







# **THE USE OF LATVIAN IN DIFFERENT SOCIOLINGUISTIC DOMAINS**

(Kerttu Kibbermann, Gunta Kļava)

Latvian language proficiency among ethnic minorities has increased significantly – from 23% in 1989 to approximately 90% in 2014. Since the restoration of independence, language policy has been focused on Latvian as both the state language and as the language of communication within all of society (Druviete 2010b, 123). While knowledge of Latvian is ensured to a sufficient degree in society, an insufficient use of Latvian can still be observed. The previous study examining the language situation was conducted on language policy during 2004-2010 (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*). There have not been many changes and the points relevant to expanding the use of Latvian remain the same (for more see *Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*, 72–127). Since 2011, the Latvian Language Agency (Latviešu valodas aģentūra – LVA) has conducted a number of other studies focused on particular sociolinguistic domains of language use. These have sought to identify solutions to problems and provide suggestions for further action. These studies include:

- *Valsts valodas prasmes pārbaude Latvijā: rezultāti un to analīze (2009–2012). Pētījums.* [The State Language Proficiency Examination in Latvia: results and their analysis (2009-2012). A study.] V. Ernstsone, A. Lazareva, B. Murniece-Buļeva. Ed. I. Muhka. Rīga: LVA, 2013;
- *Etniski heterogēnās pirmsskolas izglītības iestādes: lingvistiskā situācija un sagatavotība bilingvālās izglītības īstenošanai. Pētījuma rezultāti.* [Ethnically heterogeneous preschools: the linguistic situation and preparedness for implementing bilingual education. Study results.] BISS. Rīga: LVA, 2013;
- *Valodas ideoloģija un plašsaziņas līdzekļi: televīzija. Sociolingvistisks pētījums.* [Language ideology and the mass media: television. A sociolinguistic study.] Ed. G. Kļava. Rīga: LVA, 2015.

These studies are freely available on the LVA website as electronic publications: [http://valoda.lv/Petijumi/Sociolingvistika/mid\\_509](http://valoda.lv/Petijumi/Sociolingvistika/mid_509).

Therefore, taking into account the statistics of the 2014 population survey as well as developments in language policy during the period this study focuses on, attention is directed in this study to the use of Latvian in those sociolinguistic domains where it is possible to see trends for change – either positive or negative. In expanding the use of Latvian, one must come into contact with not only the individual opinions of members of societies, but also with the circumstances created by language competition where economic preconditions for the use of Latvian cannot be the same as those of such powerful languages as English and Russian, both of which are also present in the Latvian language marketplace (Druviete 2011c, 104).

The risks posed by language competition, however, can be minimized through the systematic application of language policy, which involves securing the legal basis of the state language status of Latvian, ensuring the scientific study of Latvian and its use in modern information technology, guaranteeing high-quality acquisition of Latvian in schools and at other levels or forms of education around the

Opportunities for  
decreasing the risks  
associated with language  
competition

world, and also advancing society's understanding of sociolinguistic processes and involving it in the implementation of language policy (Druviete 2015b, 56). These priorities are also emphasized in the *Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015-2020* (*Valsts valodas politikas pamatnostādnes 2015.-2020. gadam*) adopted in 2014.

This study analyzes the use of language with respect to its sociolinguistic functions, which are connected with national and societal interests: language in the public sphere, in various institutions, in the mass media, in the workplace, and so on.

### 3.1. Language use: trends and preconditions for an expanded role for Latvian

The choice of language in various communication situations and for various functions continues to be determined by a respondent's native language: Latvians communicate most often in Latvian, while the ethnic minority target group in most daily situations use Russian for communication (Figures 44 and 45). In certain situations, Latvians also use Russian fairly often: in communicating with work colleagues, in social situations in public, at stores, and so on, as well as when communicating with clients and business partners at work.

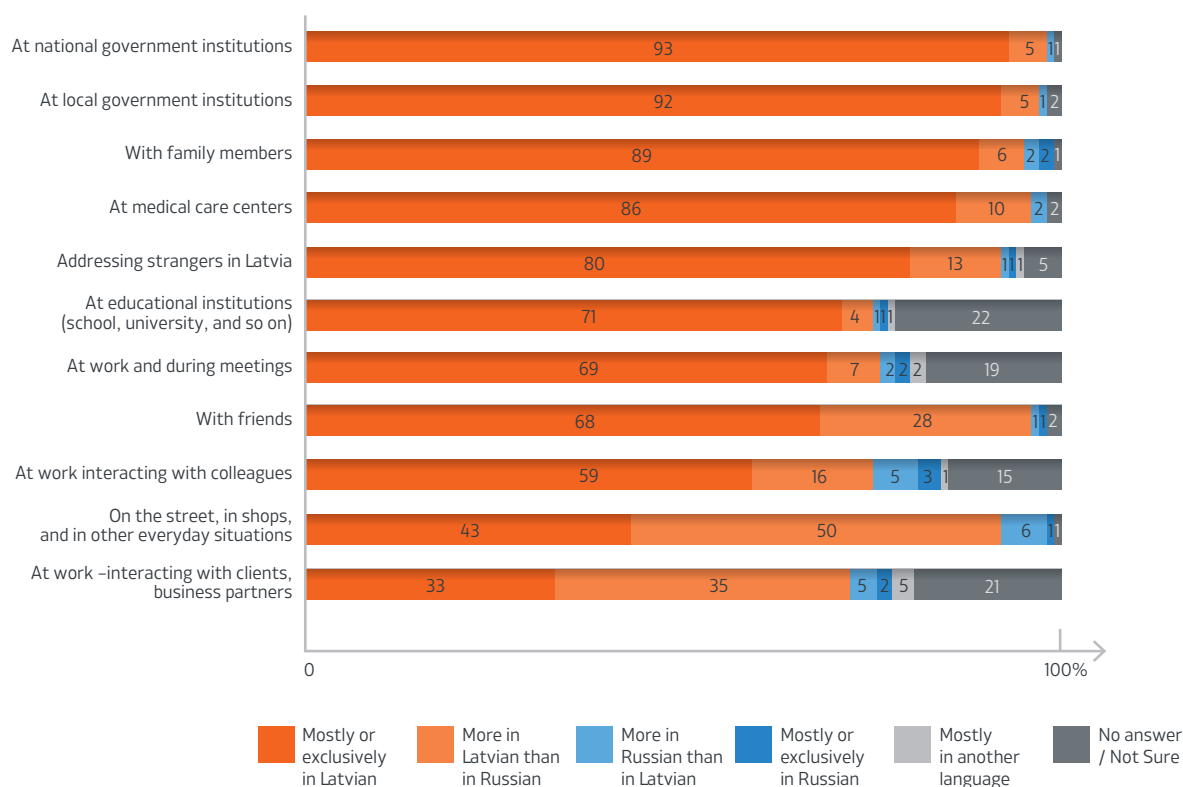


Figure 44. The language chosen for communication in various situations (respondents' native language: Latvian). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

The sociolinguistic  
domains where Latvian  
language use is  
insufficient

Comparing these statistics with those from the 2004 and 2009 LVA surveys, it can be concluded that for respondents whose native language is Latvian, Latvian language use in the aforementioned situations has remained at about the same level (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*, 60). In some situations, a small increase in the use of Latvian can be seen. Though Latvian is used predominantly, the role of Russian has not meaningfully diminished. From the perspective of state language policy, this is where negative trends can be seen in particular sociolinguistic domains in which Latvians must use Russian: the workplace and in completing tasks at the work place. Laborers and residents of Latgale and Rīga are the groups that use Russian most often for completing tasks associated with the workplace.

For members of ethnic minorities, similar changes can be seen in the choice of language in national and local government institutions, where there are about equal proportions of those using Latvian and Russian. This means that in everyday situations, members of ethnic minorities face neither limitation nor encouragement regarding the more frequent use of Latvian.

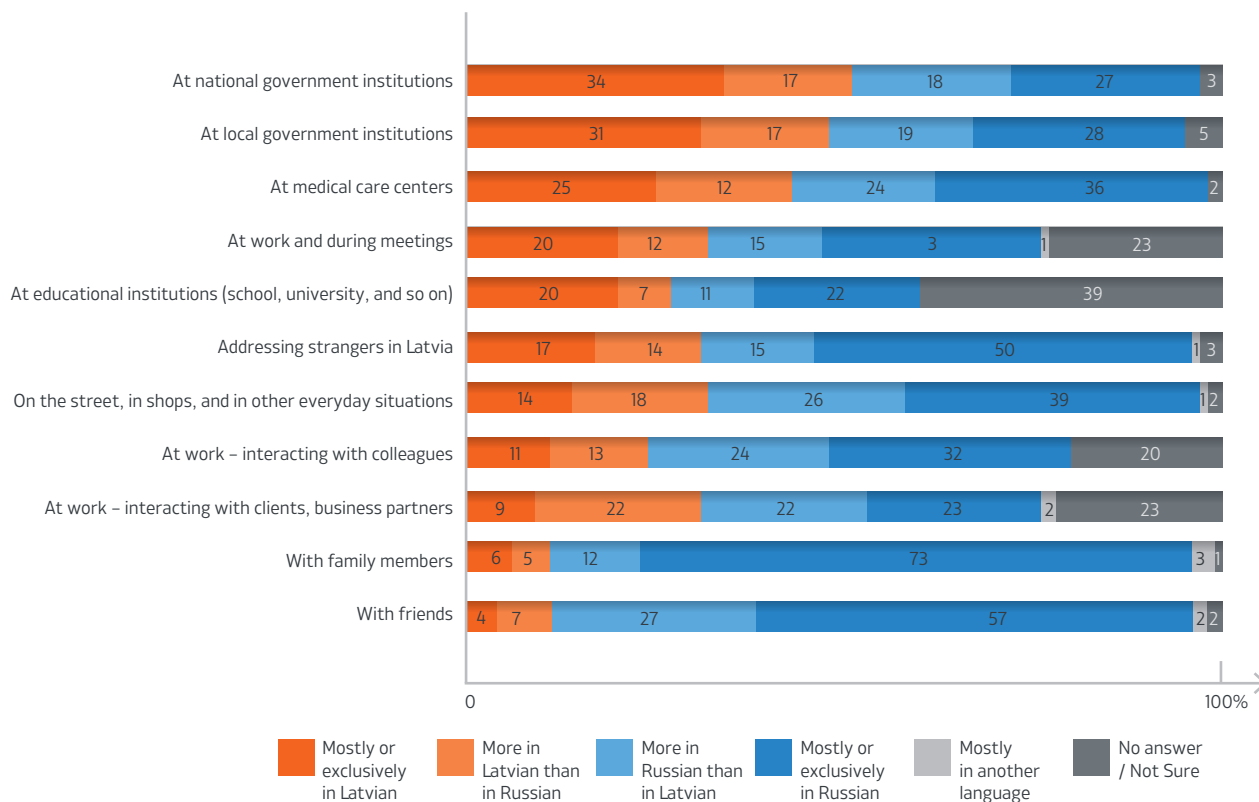


Figure 45. The language chosen for communication in various situations (respondents' native language: Russian). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

At the same time, it can be seen that in all of the situations included in the survey, the proportion of Latvian language use has slightly increased during the

last two years<sup>1</sup>; this includes the language chosen for communication with family and friends (Figure 46). Compared with the statistics from 2004, the use of Latvian in the workplace (the overall average for communication with clients as well as colleagues) has increased among members of ethnic minorities: in 2004, 22% used Latvian mainly or exclusively in the workplace (in 2004, a separate section on the language used during meetings was not included) (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*, 61), but in 2014, the overall average for both situations was 27.5%. This, of course, is not a large increase, but evaluated with respect to trends in language use and the increase in Latvian language proficiency, this does allow one to perceive a positive increase in the use of Latvian in this domain as well.

**Sociolinguistic domains in which the use of Latvian is increasing**

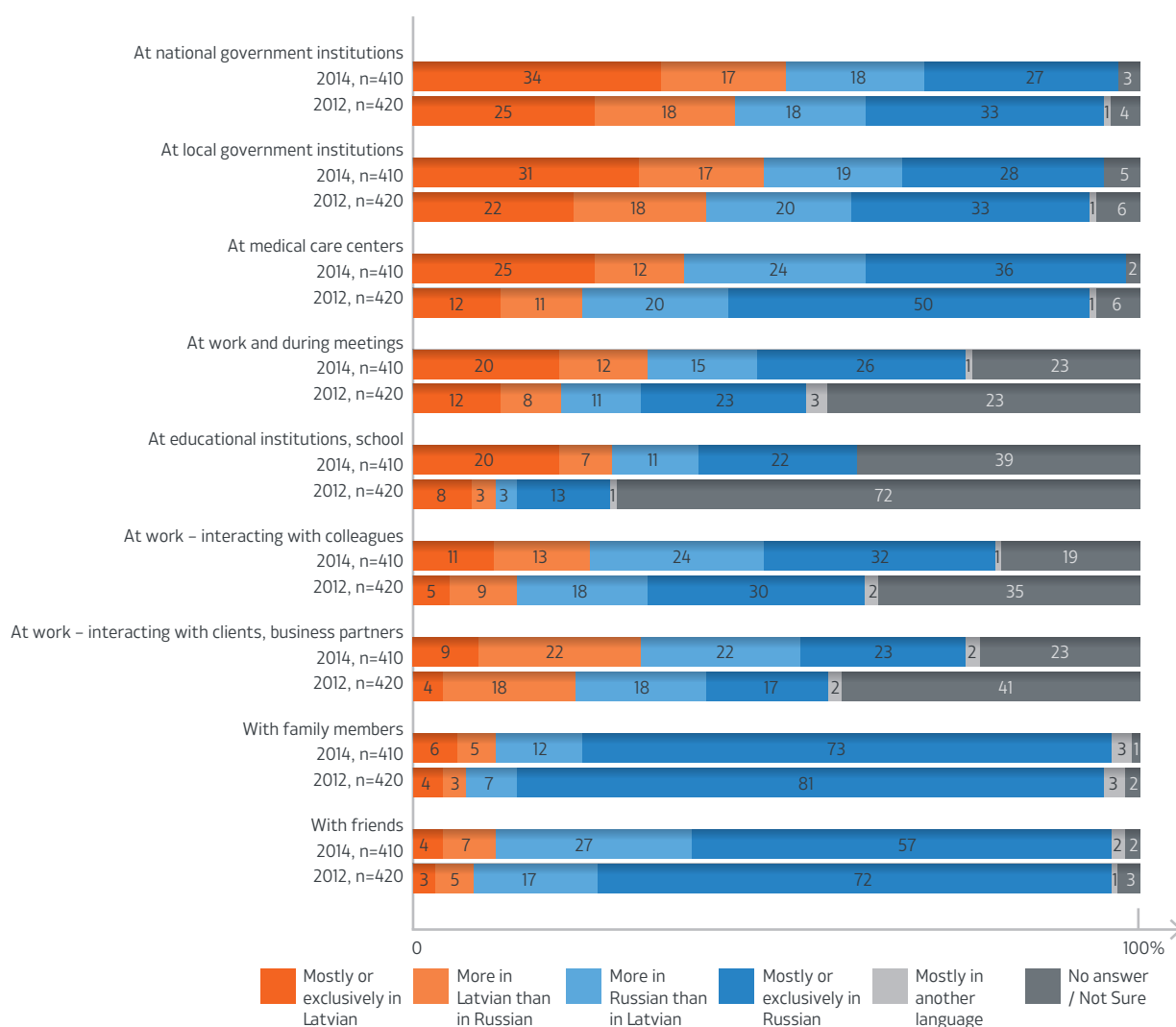


Figure 46. The language chosen for communication in various situations in 2012 and 2014 (respondents' native language: Russian). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

<sup>1</sup> Here 'the last two years' refers to the last two years of the survey, i.e., 2012-2014.

**Society's interests and  
private business**

Positive trends can also be seen when comparing statistics for language use in domains such as everyday communication on the street or in shops: in 2004, 15% of ethnic minority respondents mainly or exclusively used Latvian (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*, 61), but in 2014, this was the case for 22%.

The areas where it has been possible to establish a Latvian language environment most effectively are national and local government institutions. At the same time, the role of Russian remains meaningful in domains, such as communication in the workplace and in various everyday situations. It seems that problems also may arise because in these domains views can vary on what constitutes private and public life: private business is not the same as private life; in other words, businesspeople offer services to all residents and it is their responsibility to ensure that these services are accessible in Latvian (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*, 102).

Evaluating language choices in various situations, it can be concluded that the overall trends indicate an increase in Latvian language use among those whose native language is Latvian, as well as among members of the ethnic minority community. Placing these statistics alongside those describing language proficiency, one can see that this trend is encouraged by the further development of Latvian language proficiency as well as, possibly, by the decrease in Russian language proficiency among Latvians. Evaluating only the answers of ethnic minority respondents regarding their own linguistic behavior, it can be concluded that Russian has an important role in Latvia's linguistic environment. Positive trends in the use of Latvian can be seen among members of younger generations, who use Latvian more often in all communication situations when compared to members of older generations. The positive attitude (at least on a declarative level) of members of the ethnic minority community towards Latvian is another step on the way to this goal.

**The language choice  
for formal and informal  
communication****The frequency of Latvian language use**

In order to determine language use behaviors, in the 2014 LVA Survey, respondents were asked how often in a given situation they would begin an interaction in Latvian, but would receive a response in Russian (Figure 47). Analyzing these statistics, several seemingly paradoxical characteristics emerge from society's linguistic behavior. Approximately one tenth of Latvians have encountered situations where they have received a response in Russian to a question or request posed (in Latvian) on the street, in shops, or in social situations. In more formal language use, situations such as in national or local government institutions, medical offices, and educational institutions, the use of Latvian has achieved a stable and favored position. At the same time, larger problems are encountered, specifically in everyday social situations.

The ethnic minority target group received an answer in Latvian in the majority of cases when they asked a question in Latvian (Figure 48). At the same time, of particular note is the most surprising and rationally difficult to explain fact

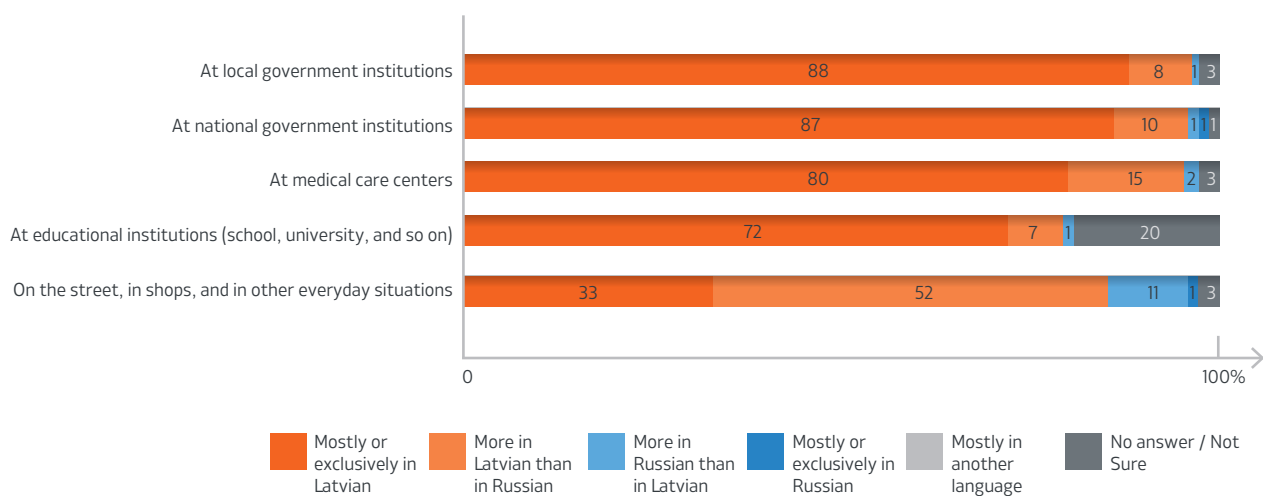


Figure 47. Responses to the question: “In what language do you receive a response when asking a question in Latvian in these language use situations?” (respondents’ native language: Latvian). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

that approximately one third of respondents whose native language was Russian indicated that they had encountered situations where they received a response in Russian to a question posed in Latvian. Here of particular note is the use of Latvian in national and local government institutions (!), i.e., institutions whose employees should first observe national interests and basic principles and also support every individual who has learned and speaks Latvian. However, the reasons for this habit – to switch to Russian as soon as there is even the slightest suspicion that a speaker’s native language is not Latvian – are to be found not only in linguistic attitudes, but also in certain deeply entrenched stereotypes (see more about this further on in this chapter).

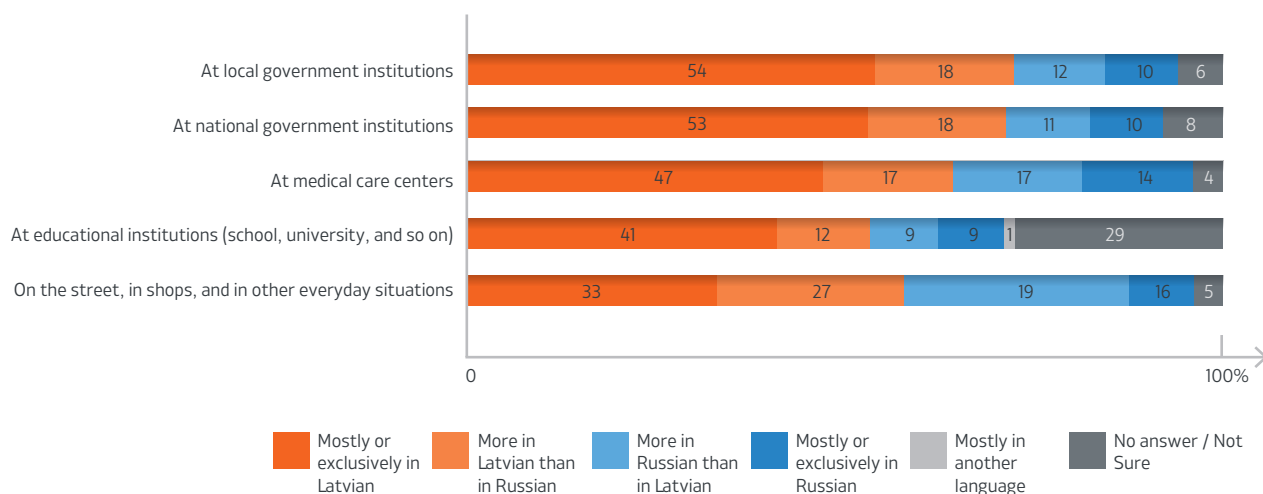


Figure 48. Responses to the question: “In what language do you receive a response when asking a question in Latvian in these language use situations?” (respondents’ native language: Russian). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

**The absence of a Latvian  
language use environment**

Pensioners, residents with low levels of education, residents with only basic Latvian language proficiency, and residents of Latgale (even in 24% of cases) are the demographics that most often receive answers in Russian to questions asked in Latvian. The statistics from Latgale testify to the language situation in this region, which has the least amount of Latvian language speakers. These results show that unfortunately there is not always an opportunity to speak Latvian available to those who have learned and speak it. The habit of those whose native language is Latvian to switch to Russian in speaking to those for whom Latvian is not their native language does not support the learning or use of Latvian.

The LVA Survey 2014 also determined how often different difficulties arise for members of the ethnic minority community in using Latvian (Figure 49). Statistics show that the proportion of ethnic minority respondents who have had difficulties in using Latvian is small. 57.7% of respondents have not experienced any difficulties in using Latvian. Somewhat more often difficulties arise at national and local government institutions; approximately, one-quarter of respondents stated that they have sometimes or often felt difficulty in using Latvian at these institutions. A similar situation also can be observed at medical care facilities. The proportion of those who have experienced difficulties in other situations included in the survey does not exceed 10-15%.

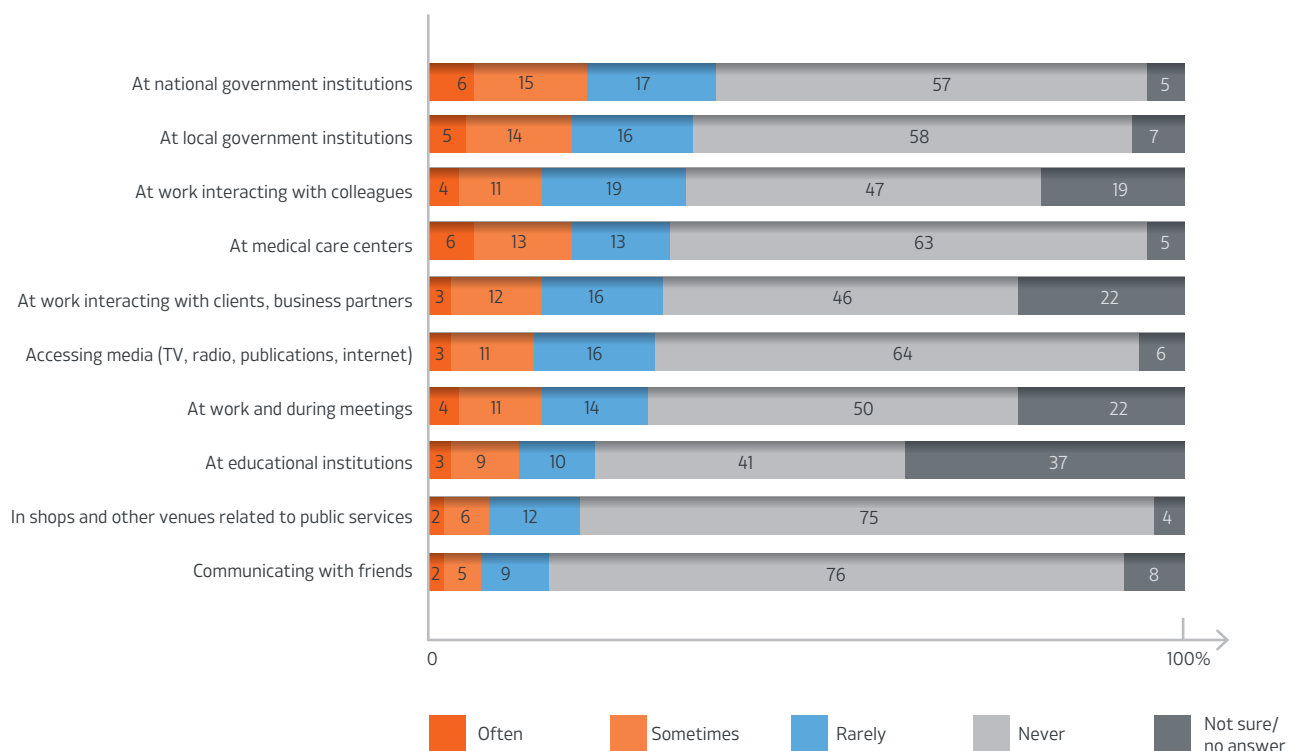


Figure 49. The frequency of difficulty in using Latvian in different communications situations. The respondents speak Latvian, but it is not their native language. Statistics: LVA Survey 2014

The survey statistics can be compared with the survey respondents' views regarding the overall situation of Latvian language use. The LVA Survey 2014 determined how frequently respondents themselves used Latvian in communicating. The respondents whose native language is Latvian indicated how often, compared to the situation 5-6 years ago, they used Latvian in communicating with members of the ethnic minority community (Figure 50). The answers suggest that Latvian is now used more frequently (33% used Latvian more often than five years ago, only 8% used Latvian less often).

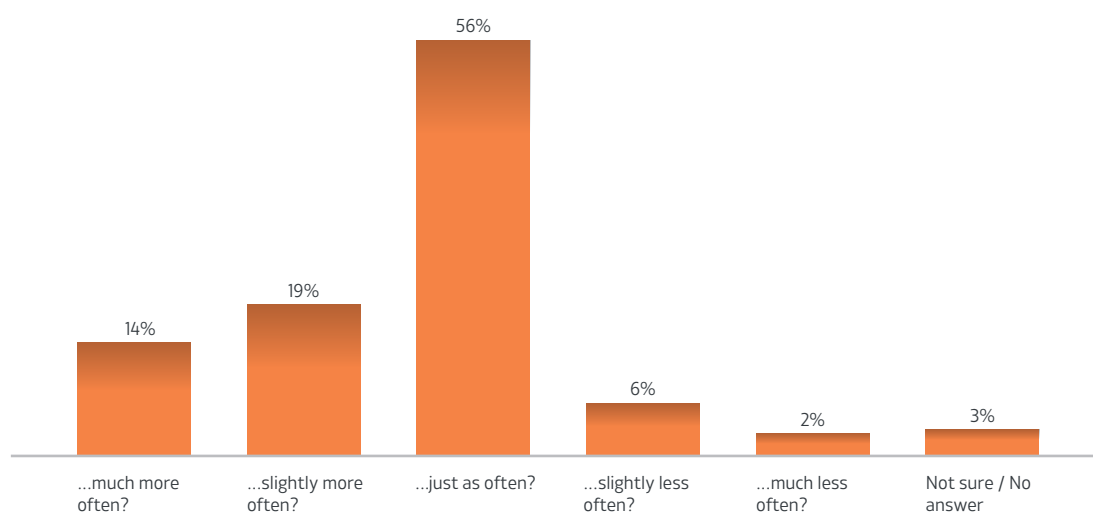


Figure 50. The use of Latvian in communicating with members of the ethnic minority community compared with 5-6 years ago (respondents' native language: Latvian). Statistics: LVA Survey 2014

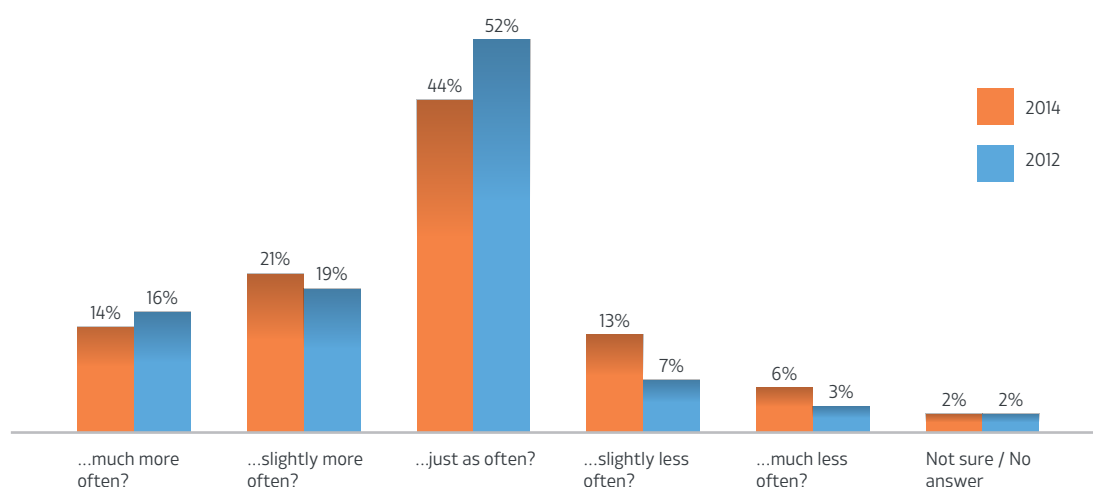


Figure 51. The use of Latvian in communication with Latvians compared to 5-6 years ago (the respondents spoke Latvian, but not as their native language). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey.

The responses of members of the ethnic minority community indicate that they also use Latvian more often in communicating with Latvians. Since at least 2012, when the same question was posed to this group of respondents, Latvian has been used more often in communicating with Latvians (Figure 51). Latvian is used for communicating with Latvians most often by members of younger generations.

Respondents' answers regarding the frequency of their Latvian language use have shown an increase in the use of Latvian for an even longer period of time. In 2004, 51% of respondents indicated that Latvian was used more often where they live and 39% indicated that Latvian was used just as often (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*, 64). Thus, as an increase in use has also been observed in recent years, this shows that the frequency of Latvian language use continues to increase.

If one compares the responses of language users concerning the frequency with which they use Latvian, their responses indicating a belief that all of Latvia's residents (99%) must have Latvian language proficiency, and the reasons they feel this proficiency is necessary, one must conclude that the positive overall evaluation one sees in these responses is not reflected by society's actual behavior. Currently, this means that the use of Latvian has established itself more in formal contexts, and declaratively, but not practically as part of everyday use. In other words, the conditions have been created for securing Latvian in its role as the state language, but the corresponding results among language speakers cannot be reached with the same speed.

### 3.2. Language choice in the mass media

The mass media have a special role in securing the position of Latvian as the state language. In the previous study conducted by the LVA to evaluate the language situation (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011* [The Language Situation in Latvia 2011]), it was concluded that the use of Latvian in the mass media is not only threatened, but also, when its politically and economically sensitive nature is taken into account, fairly complicated from the perspective of language policy. In 2014, in order to clarify the situation and develop suggestions for how to expand the use of Latvian in the mass media, the LVA undertook a study called *Language ideology and mass media: television* (*Valodas ideoloģija un plašsaziņas līdzekļi: televīzija*).

#### Language choice and television

The study concluded that expanding the presence of Latvian on television, which is today the most influential mass medium, is hindered by several factors: some purely financial, others political. And this is no longer a question of language policy. The array of problems found in this area is fairly broad and include: the division of the informational space; the low level of competitiveness and quality of television programs available in Latvian; the fact that the amount of Russian used on those channels that do broadcast in Latvian is unnecessarily

high; the lack of understanding or desire on the part of Latvia's public figures, officials, and politicians to observe the accepted guidelines of state language policy by choosing Russian (often with an insufficient degree of proficiency) for communicating with society in the mass media; insufficient legal protection and requirements for the use of Latvian in the mass media; a fairly weak understanding by those working in the mass media (on all levels) of the importance of their field in implementing language policy (*Valodas ideoloģija 2015*).

Surveys conducted in the past regarding the habits of residents in accessing mass media and other information sources have shown which languages are used most often. Given the wide variety of choices, mass media are chosen based on one's native language; for example, those whose native language is Latvian most often watch television in Latvian, while those whose native language is Russian most often watch television in Russian. Latvian respondents most often select Latvian print sources for information. It is alarming that, according to the statistics from the LVA study, the number of Latvian respondents who watch television most often in Russian continues to increase (Figure 52).

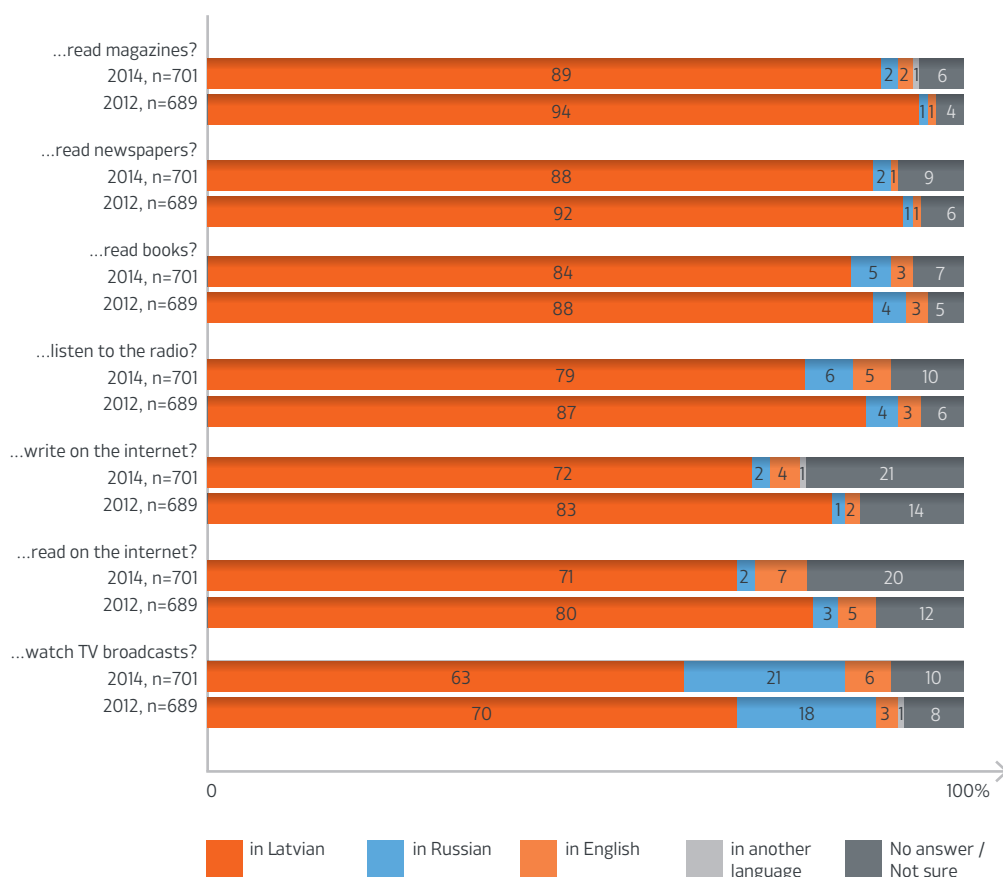


Figure 52. The choice of language and information sources. Collected responses: most often (respondents' native language: Latvian). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

The increase in the use of mass media sources in English is increasing only slightly, with Latvians utilizing English-language media slightly more often than respondents whose native language is Russian.

Ethnic minority respondents also utilize information sources most often in their native – Russian – language (Figure 53). It is again important to highlight television in particular; the total number of respondents who watch television in Latvian is smaller than the number of Latvians who watch television in Russian. Therefore, with respect to the choice of television in Latvia, the Russian language dominates. However, Latvian is used more often among all respondents in selecting other information sources.

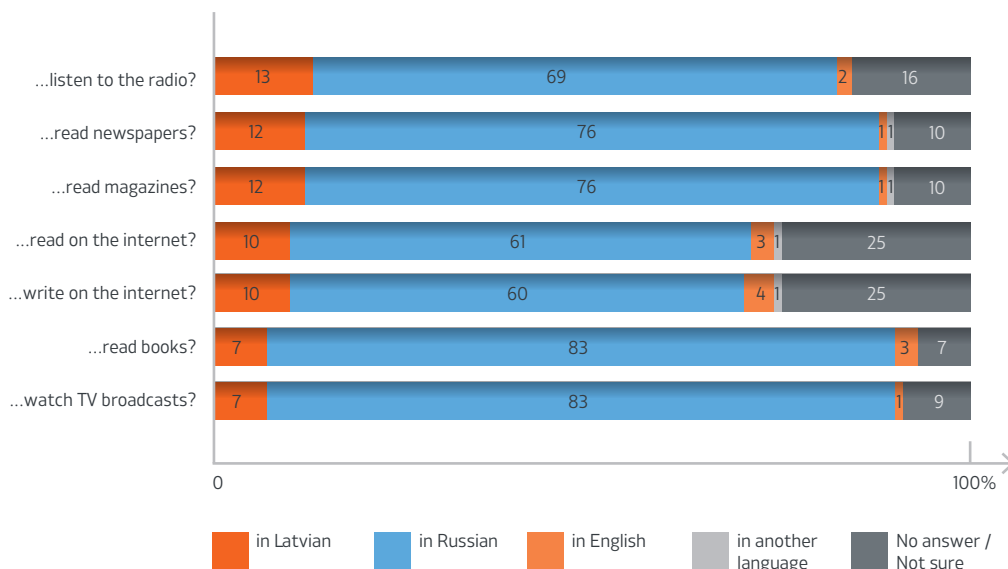


Figure 53. The choice of language and information sources. Collected responses: most often (respondents' native language: Russian). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey.

**Television and the internet: the most frequently used sources for acquiring information in Latvian**

The statistics in Figure 53 show the most often used language in the ethnic minority community for various sociolinguistic functions. However, this does not mean that members of ethnic minorities do not use mass media in Latvian at all. In the 2014 LVA Survey, it was determined that those individuals from ethnic minorities who do use mass media in Latvian, most often watch television as their means for getting information. The survey statistics showing the habits of the ethnic minority community in watching television in Latvian show that 60% of all respondents definitely watched television in Latvian, 14% had difficulty in answering this question, 20% did not watch television in Latvian, and 6% indicated that they did not watch television at all. The second most popular information source in Latvian is the internet: only 21% of members of ethnic minorities do not utilize the internet in Latvian and 14% claim that they do not use the internet at

all. Radio and the print media are somewhat less popular information sources: 44% do not listen to the radio in Latvian, 42% do not read newspapers and/or magazines in Latvian.

Older people watch television in Latvian most often, while young people use the internet in Latvian most often. In addition, all generations of the ethnic minority community use the mass media and internet in Latvian in order to find out the news, but use mass media sources in Russian more for entertainment. Older people most often watch the news (45%), and the most popular TV networks among these respondents are LNT and LTV1. Young people (up to the age of 24) from the ethnic minority community use Latvian the most on the internet (88% of respondents); in addition, members of middle generations (up to the age of 44) also use Latvian online fairly often. All respondents use news websites most often in Latvian. The most popular homepages visited by members of the ethnic minority community are *delfi.lv*, *tvnet.lv* and Latvia's social network *Draugiem.lv*, which is used most often specifically by young people (25%).

Members of ethnic minorities who use mass media in Latvian, very rarely feel any difficulty due to language; only 13% have difficulties often or sometimes, 80% have difficulties rarely or never. Additionally, those members of the ethnic minority community who do not speak Latvian, named television and other forms of mass media as one of their favored methods for Latvian language acquisition.

As one of the sociolinguistic domains for language use, mass media in Latvian not only have ideological significance for the country, but the use and availability of Latvian in the mass media also shows the real language hierarchy and language situation (*Valodas ideoloģija 2015*, 6). The statistics from the 2012 and 2014 LVA Surveys show that the use of Russian is more widespread than Latvian in television specifically. There are several different reasons for this: the diversity or lack thereof of available programming; content and quality, which means that mass media broadcasting in Latvian cannot compete with the easily available television from Russia and its financial support; present-day technological possibilities; the selection of available television programming offered by those selling these services; and so on. At the same time, television programs in other languages (for example, in English, the use of which is slowly increasing, though is still small) are not watched very often, specifically due to insufficient English language proficiency.

Currently, television is the domain where the use of Latvian is insufficient and where it can be complicated to organize and ensure its use – both for legal and practical reasons (for more about this see *Valodas ideoloģija 2015*). In this domain, national and community interests compete with private business interests. Television and other mass media sources are used for acquiring information and, especially in the case of television, for entertainment, which is easiest to do in one's native language. This is easy to accomplish for most native Russian speakers in Latvia's ethnic minority community. Here it should be noted that not all ethnic minorities in Latvia enjoy this privilege equally; even the availability of television in the neighboring Lithuanian and Estonian languages is very limited.

The most popular  
television networks and  
web portals

Obstacles preventing the  
use of Latvian language  
mass media sources

The increase in Russian  
language television  
viewing

As the survey results show, the largest portion of Latvia's residents watch television in Latvian, which is an important indicator of the necessity for developing our own television programs, and also for ensuring the possibility for networks to produce their own high-quality entertainment programming. First of all, because the number of Latvians choosing to watch Russian networks is increasing, as these networks offer specialized programming for different audiences; also, the selection of entertainment programming is extensive and this – perhaps imperceptibly and as if without any significance – not only works to decrease the use of Latvian in mass media sources, but also plants an ideological seed in the viewers' awareness. This ideological seed, unfortunately, is one that denies any reason for the existence of the Latvian state. Therefore, it is not without cause that there is already a precedent for banning the rebroadcasting of several television networks from Russia in Latvia and Lithuania (*Valodas ideoloģija* 2015, 78–81).

Latvia's television networks have an important role in ensuring the use of Latvian in this sociolinguistic domain. Consumers of mass media choose television most often as their source of information (though among young people the amount of internet use is increasing); also, members of the ethnic minority community most often choose to watch news programs specifically in Latvian, which promotes the establishment of a unified information space. Though television and other mass media sources are not the only means or tool for learning language, they can be useful in helping to improve and solidify language proficiency, something which was also acknowledged by the respondents to the 2014 LVA Survey. Therefore, before implementing projects for the creation of new and non-competitive television in Russian (which does not promote the motivation to learn Latvian and degrades understanding of the societal integration by placing one ethnic minority group in a privileged position), it is instead necessary to promote the development of sufficiently diverse, good quality programming in Latvian devoted not just to news broadcasts, but also to entertainment and other areas. It is also necessary to ensure the availability of programming in Latvian in all parts of the territory of Latvia, which unfortunately continues to be a significant problem in some areas. It will be more difficult to learn and use Latvian if not every member of society wishing to do so has as varied as possible a selection of methods and forms in which to speak, watch, listen to, and write in Latvian.

### 3.3. The possible and desirable increases in Latvian language use

#### Latvian language use across various domains

The goal of implementing state language policy is to ensure the comprehensive use of Latvian in line with its status as the state language. The use of Latvian in various domains is determined by different factors: language status and its legal basis, economic and workplace circumstances, language proficiency and its increase, positive linguistic attitudes, and so on. The LVA sociolinguistic survey

results show that the use of Latvian in the public sphere (state administration, communication at work, on the street, in shops, in medical facilities, and so on) is affected by the formality of the communication situation and the official or otherwise significant position of those involved in a conversation. Latvian is used more in official institutions, while for personal and informal communication the use of Russian is increasing. Despite the fact the majority of Latvia's residents are able to communicate in Latvian (with the exception of the approximately 10% who do not speak Latvian), Latvian is not used primarily due to other reasons connected with linguistic attitudes and linguistic behavior (for more on this see Section 3.4).

Comparing language use in all areas over a number of years, it can be concluded that the use of Latvian has increased and at the base of this are a number of instrumental mechanisms, including requirements detailed in normative acts pertaining to various areas (education, the workplace, and so on). However, at least on a declarative level, i.e., acknowledging the necessity for every resident of the country to know Latvian, the integrative function of Latvian has also increased (Figure 54).

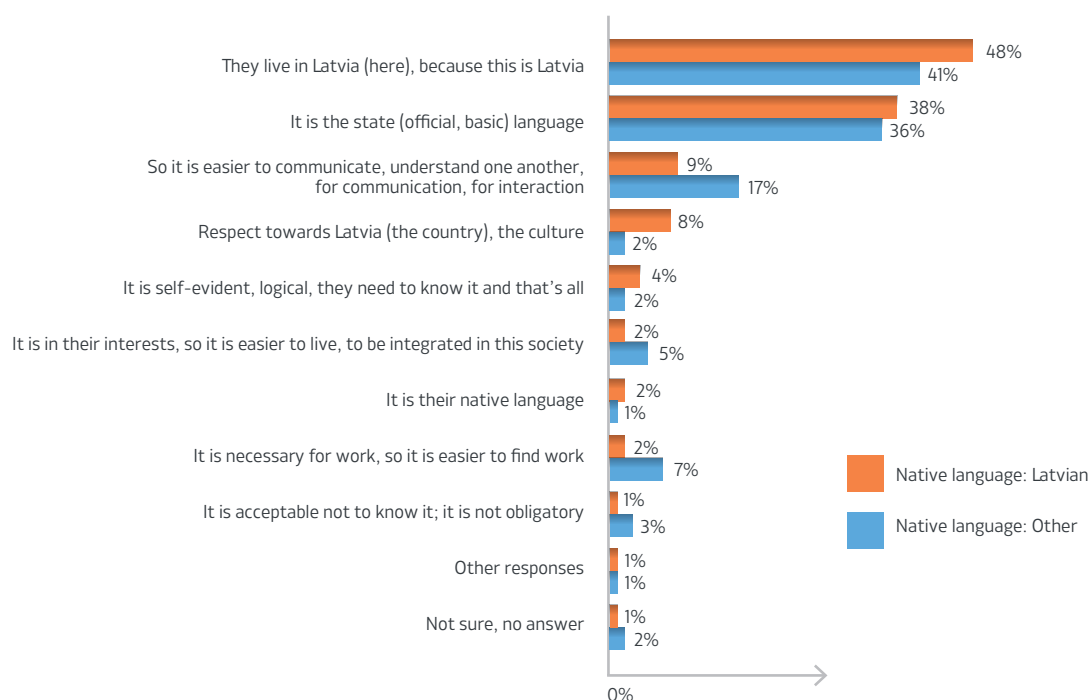


Figure 54. Responses to the question "Why do all residents of Latvia need to speak Latvian?" (in percentages). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey

**Trends in various  
language use situations**

In recent years, no considerable change has occurred in the language use habits of Latvian respondents. In all areas, Latvian is used most often, however, as a situation becomes more informal, the tolerance by Latvians for Russian language use also increases. Latvians have begun to use Russian more often in some areas. Mainly this refers to watching television: in 2014, 21% of respondents whose native language was Latvian watched television in Russian most often. Due to the use of different methodologies and the formulation of the questions, there are no precisely comparable statistics from those collected as part of the 2008 survey (*Valoda 2008*); however, it is possible to see trends. Thus, in 2008, 9.5% respondents whose native language was Latvian did not watch television in Latvian. Television, as mentioned already, is problematic; in circumstances characterized by huge competition (various television programs originating in Russia, programs which are also sources of propaganda), domestic television in Latvian is not able to offer the necessary selection and quality of programming; this has also led to changes in the choices of Latvian viewers with respect to their favored mass media sources.

In other areas, Latvians use Latvian more often than ten or more years ago: in a study conducted in 2004 (*Latviešu valodas attīstības un lietojuma problēmas 2004* [Problems of Latvian language development and use 2004]) it was determined that Latvians used Latvian most often in government institutions (85%), in communicating with friends (88%), in everyday life (outside of home) (82%), in the workplace (58%), and in interacting with members of other ethnicities (43%). In 2014, the use of Latvian was similar in these situations, though showing a trend towards a slight increase in use. These statistics reveal the actual possibilities for using Latvian in these sociolinguistic domains (the responses “only in Latvian” and “in Latvian more than in Russian” are combined): in government institutions (98%), in communicating with friends (96%), in the workplace (73%), in everyday life (93%), in interacting with strangers (93%). Here the most significant indicators showing the increase in the use of Latvian can be seen in the workplace and in everyday life.

An increased use of Latvian is also slowly occurring among ethnic minority respondents (see Figure 46). Compared with the situation 10 years ago, it can be seen that the situations in which Latvian use has increased among ethnic minorities are formal (in governmental institutions and at medical facilities) as well as less formal. For example, in everyday situations outside of the home, in 2004, 15% of ethnic minority respondents primarily used Latvian, the same was true in 2014 for 32%; in the workplace in 2004, 22% ethnic minority respondents primarily used Latvian, while in 2014, approximately 30% said the same.

While there are domains where Russian language use is still fairly high (for example, in the choice of mass media sources and in communicating at work with colleagues and clients), there are other circumstances where the use of Latvian is more widespread and continuing to increase. This is primarily ensured by the increase in Latvian language proficiency, though also to a certain extent

**The need to speak Latvian  
in everyday life – the main  
impetus for language use**

by the decrease in Russian language proficiency among Latvians. However, the most effective factor in increasing Latvian language use is the need to speak Latvian. This can be accomplished in several ways: a legal basis exists in Latvia and continues to be updated to respond to the situation (for example, the establishment of language proficiency standards for various professions, and so on); language acquisition programs are implemented according to internationally defined language proficiency levels (for example, Latvian language acquisition in the formal education system and also programs for adults); in addition, wide-ranging research into Latvian and the development of Latvian is continuing (language standardization, language used in information technology, and so on).

In the 2014 LVA Survey, one of the questions asked what was necessary for the use of Latvian to increase. As this was an open question where respondents were not given a selection of answers to choose from, the answers were quite varied. Approximately one third of respondents were not able to answer the question. Still, combining several different formulations, it can be concluded that an increased use of Latvian can be achieved by: 1) speaking Latvian (15%); 2) learning Latvian from early childhood and the availability of language acquisition opportunities for everyone who is interested (14%); 3) a positive linguistic attitude first of all from the Latvian side, which will create a positive linguistic attitude in others and will prompt them to use the language (10%).

Another question was asked to determine opinions on how to create a positive environment for Latvian language use. Approximately one-third of respondents did not have an opinion on this question. The remaining respondents indicated the need for a positive attitude among people in order to create a desire to learn and speak Latvian (15%); the value of organizing common cultural events in forming a unified society (12%); the necessity of just speaking Latvian (10%); and so on.

The responses to these questions show that the dominant view in Latvian society is that Latvian language use can be encouraged not with instrumental or economic considerations, which have been at the foundation of efforts devoted to Latvian language acquisition and the further development of proficiency, but instead with a need or desire to live together with unified ideas and values. It seems that now those of us working in the field of language management can begin to gradually move from the first important task – that of teaching Latvian to all of Latvia's residents – to the next no less important, but more complicated, task – ensuring the comprehensive use of Latvian. This means ensuring the further development of Latvian language proficiency with respect to formal language acquisition (high-quality training of language teachers and the continued improvement of their qualifications, the development of necessary language learning materials, and so on) as well as to language use in everyday life where for the moment the most considerable obstacles are the idiosyncrasies present in society's linguistic attitudes and habits in linguistic behavior.

### 3.4. The linguistic attitude and linguistic behavior of society: conditions for changing the situation

#### The role of linguistic attitude in language policy

Linguistic attitude is composed of individuals' views and opinions about language(s) and language variants (Swann, Deumert et al. 2004, 17). Linguistic attitudes are interwoven through our everyday language use on all levels: from word use in language to the coexistence of several languages (Garrett 2011, 2). In our present-day multilingual society, linguistic attitude is a significant indicator for the implementation of language policy; it has a meaningful role in ensuring the existence of a state language or languages. The concept of "linguistic attitude" contains several elements: the attitude towards one's own language and other languages, which is based in a nation's historic experience, subjective opinions or stereotypes, the mentality of an ethnic group in concrete language environments and situations, i.e., linguistic attitude has a social origin, which can meaningfully impact the behavior of a language's speakers and a language's long-term viability. It is individual, but also is based on the opinions of society or parts of society, and is also formed by community opinions. Though linguistic attitude is never static, it is somewhat difficult to change. The significance of the linguistic attitude of speakers in implementing language policy within a multilingual society is shown in Figure 55, which also shows the close mutual connection and influence among various components of the language situation. It can be seen here how a broad collection of subjective factors influences both the development and implementation of language policy.

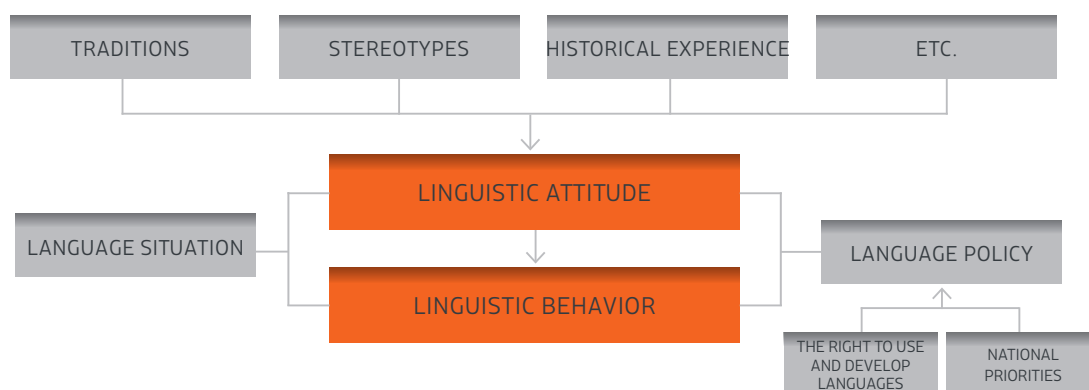


Figure 55. The significance of linguistic attitude in implementing language policy. Author: G. Kļava.

In Latvian language policy, which has as its main goal the securing of the official status, long-term viability, and development of Latvian, linguistic attitude is a significant factor for achieving the comprehensive use of Latvian across society in line with its status. As mentioned earlier, the use of Latvian in Latvia is currently insufficient in certain sociolinguistically significant domains and does not correspond to its status, despite the fact that Latvian language proficiency is very high across all of society (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*, 50–68; *Valodas ideoloģija 2015*, 116). However, use of Latvian does not always correspond to the level of language proficiency within society and the main cause of this inconsistency is society's linguistic attitude.

From as early as the end of the 1990s, when the Latvian Language Institute, under the leadership of sociolinguistics professor I. Druviete, began to conduct studies on the language situation in Latvia (*Latvijas valodas situācijas dinamika* (1995–2000) 1999/2000), almost all of those surveyed responded “yes” to the question “Do all of Latvia's residents need to know Latvian?” (approximately 90% of respondents gave this answer independent of their native language, age, or other indicators). However, while Latvian language proficiency is considered to be necessary for life in Latvia, the actual use of Latvian is influenced by various psychological, historical, economic, and other factors, which encourage the formation and existence of stereotypes in all parts of society. As a result, tendencies towards segregation within society end up being supported. Studying the linguistic views and habits of Latvian society, it is possible to more effectively determine directions for work and the tasks necessary for expanding the use of Latvian by refuting linguistic stereotypes. Linguistic attitude and linguistic stereotypes influence linguistic perceptions, perspective, beliefs, and shape linguistic behavior (Garrett 2011, 21).

In Latvia's linguistic situation, where not only the state language, Latvian, but also another fairly powerful competing language, Russian, is used, linguistic attitude influences speakers' language choice in every communication situation. Studies conducted in recent years (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*; *Valodas ideoloģija 2015*; and others) on Latvia's language situation and its various components show that, on one hand, many of the goals set by language policy have been reached, successfully ensuring Latvian language proficiency across society up to a completely sufficient statistical level. However, on the other hand, various factors prevent a sufficient level Latvian language use within society. These factors point to tasks for the near future which are necessary for the implementation of language policy; involving all of society in expanding the use of Latvian is one of the most complicated tasks. This is also indicated as one of the four directions for action in *Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015–2020* (*Valsts valodas politikas pamatnostādnes 2015.–2020. gadam*) and it has special significance as “the position of Latvian is not endangered by objective, but instead by subjective factors” (Druviete 2015b, 57).

Results of the State  
Language Proficiency  
Examination**Latvian language proficiency and the motivations for language acquisition**

In securing the long-term viability of a language, its number of speakers is fundamental (*Assessing Ethnolinguistic Vitality 2000*, 24). Those using Latvian are not only Latvians but also representatives of many other ethnicities living in Latvia. Unfortunately, in the last national census in 2011, no question was asked regarding the language proficiency of residents, but only about the language most used at home, which is not a significant question with respect to the planning and implementation of language policy, because the state does not control or interfere with language use for private communication (as is detailed in the State Language Law). This indicator does allow one to see how demographic processes affect language use in the private sphere. Information on levels of language proficiency is much more important and useful for language policy planning and the evaluation of its results; this was last surveyed in a national census in 2000 and is regularly studied as part of sociolinguistic surveys conducted by the LVA. Thus, in the 2000 Latvian National Census, it was determined that Latvian was known by 80% of all residents.

In the LVA study published in 2013 regarding State Language Proficiency Examination results between 2009 and 2012, it was concluded that during this period, the number of those taking the language proficiency exam had increased (which is determined by the economic situation within the country and normative acts passed during this period), as was the number of those who successfully passed the exam, and it was also established that those who had received the highest proficiency levels (B or C) in the exam had steadily increased (*Valsts valodas prasmes pārbaude 2013*, 34–38).

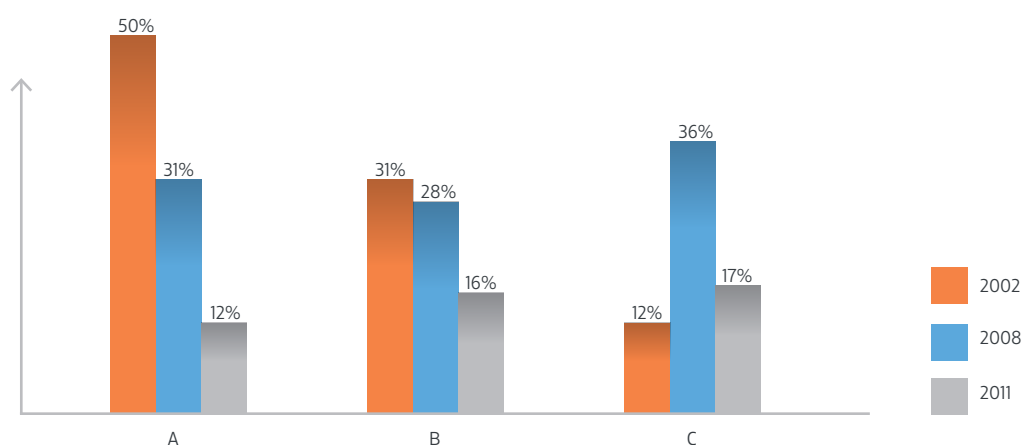


Figure 56. Proficiency results by level in the State Language Proficiency Examination (in percentages).  
Statistics: *Valsts valodas prasmes pārbaude 2013* (State Language Proficiency Exam 2013)

In addition, a portion of those taking the State Language Proficiency Examination will take it repeatedly and of those individuals, 78% raise their result by an entire level, while 22% raise their Latvian language proficiency result within a level (for example, from B1 to B2). It should be noted that the State Language Proficiency Examination is taken in the following circumstances: as a professional requirement or one related to one's position, in order to apply for a permanent residence permit, or to apply for the status of European Union permanent resident. The majority of those taking the exam do so specifically due to a work-related requirement (among these are also the unemployed, for whom Latvian is necessary in getting a job). In the last three years, at all levels of the State Language Proficiency Examination the largest proportion of those taking it have been those aged 31-50, which is within the economically most active age group (ages 31-60) and forms 74% of those taking the exam (*Valsts valodas prasmes pārbaude 2013*, 43). The requirements of normative acts are among the instruments which, at least in part, promote Latvian language acquisition and use in everyday life within society. To a certain extent this is supported by the 15 most often listed professions of those taking the State Language Proficiency Examination: sales clerk, cook, driver, tailor, construction worker, accountant, guard, engineer, laborer, janitor, housewife, operator, nurse, electrician, manager.

Therefore, instrumental motivation for language acquisition, that is, that language is a tool used for personal gain (for example, a job, residence permit, education, and so on), takes a higher place among those taking the State Language Proficiency Examination than that of integrative motivation, which stems from an individual's wish to understand and belong to a specific society, culture, country. An integrative motivation can often act as a stronger basis for the desire to learn a language and for more effective language acquisition. Both motivations for language acquisition – the instrumental and the integrative – should work together and be connected, in order for every individual's language acquisition process to be as effective as possible and to ensure the successful fulfilment of that individual's wish to speak that language, (for more on motivations for language acquisition see Gardner, Lambert 1972; Gardner, MacIntyre 1991; Martí et al. 2005; Brown 2014; and others).

Statistics from the population survey show that in the first years of independence, the requirements of normative acts encouraged language acquisition the most, i.e., so that one could work, take an exam, receive citizenship, and so on (Figure 57). The studies conducted in 1996 and 1999 (*Latvijas valodas situācijas dinamika 1999/2000*) show that during this time the most important role for ensuring Latvian language acquisition was the need to obtain a certification of language proficiency (for more see Hirša 2007) along with a wider availability of opportunities for learning Latvian.

#### Description of those taking the State Language Proficiency Examination

#### Motivations for language acquisition

## THE USE OF LATVIAN IN DIFFERENT SOCIOLINGUISTIC DOMAINS

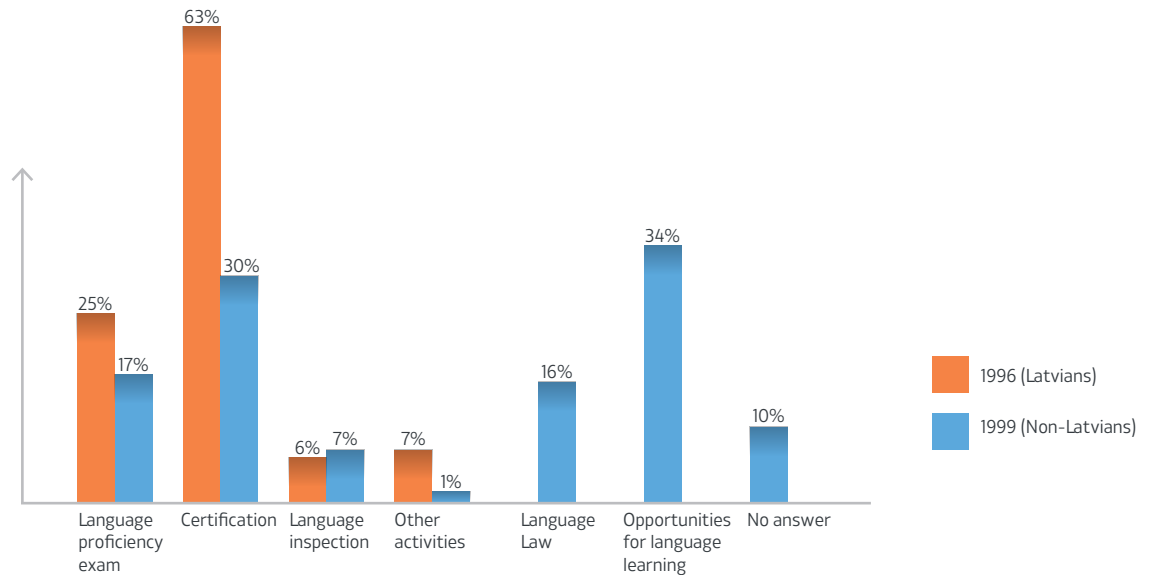


Figure 57. Activities, which encouraged Latvian language acquisition among ethnic minorities. Statistics: *Latvijas valodas situācijas dinamika 1999/2000 (The Dynamics of the Latvian Language Situation 1999/2000)*

An increase in the indicators showing an integrative motivation for language acquisition

The survey results also show the history of the Latvian language acquisition process: the legal basis of the status of Latvian was developed in the beginning and gradually the role of Latvian grew in the everyday life and communication of society as a whole. This process can also be seen in the statistics from the survey conducted in 2004: since the restoration of independence, Latvian has been learned and proficiency in Latvian further developed not only in order to, for example, pass the State Language Proficiency Examination and find work, but also because of general need to use Latvian (Figure 58).

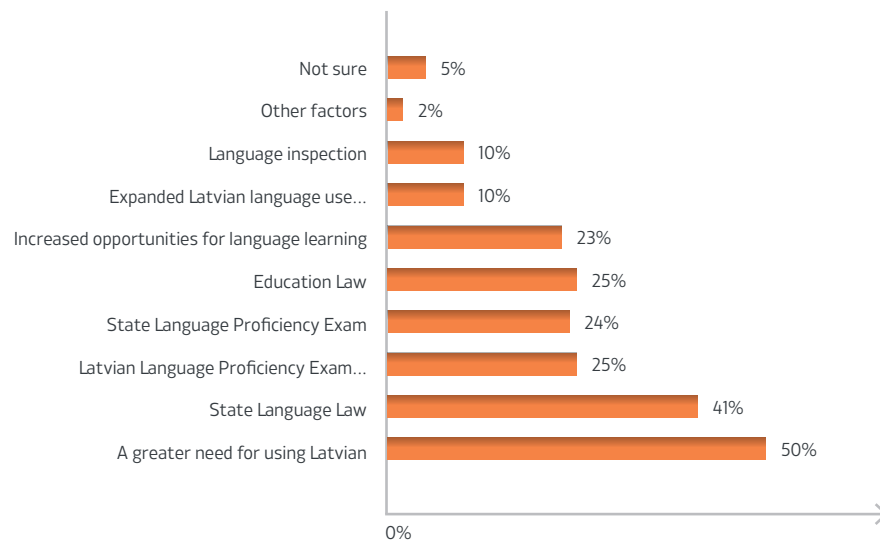


Figure 58. Factors encouraging the use of Latvian. All respondents (in percentages). Statistics: Data Serviss 2004

### Changes in linguistic attitude

Statistics from sociolinguistic surveys show that currently, especially in the youngest generation of the ethnic minority community, a higher level of language proficiency and a positive language attitude increasingly depends on a desire to belong to Latvia's society and to Latvia as a country; the desire to use Latvian in various communication situations is also increasing.

As linguistic attitude is influenced by many other factors not directly connected with language, in analyzing language policy, statistics from studies showing a broader picture of society's attitudes towards the country are useful; also, it is important to take into account that language is one of the most significant national symbols in Latvia. Positive trends can be seen in the study *A sense of belonging to Latvia (Piederības sajūta Latvijai)* conducted in 2014 by the public opinion research center SKDS. These statistics can be compared with those of the wide-ranging survey of Latvia's residents in 2000 (*Ceļā uz pilsonisku sabiedrību 2001* [On the way to a civic society 2001]), which also contain residents' answers to the question concerning their sense of belonging to Latvia. Although the two studies were not designed according to identical principles, one can still conclude that the members of Latvia's ethnic minority community associate their national and territorial identity with Latvia (Figure 59). It is also important to note that considerable changes have occurred over the course of just a few years: a feeling of belonging to the European Union and the Baltic countries has noticeably increased.

The ethnic minority community's sense of belonging to Latvia

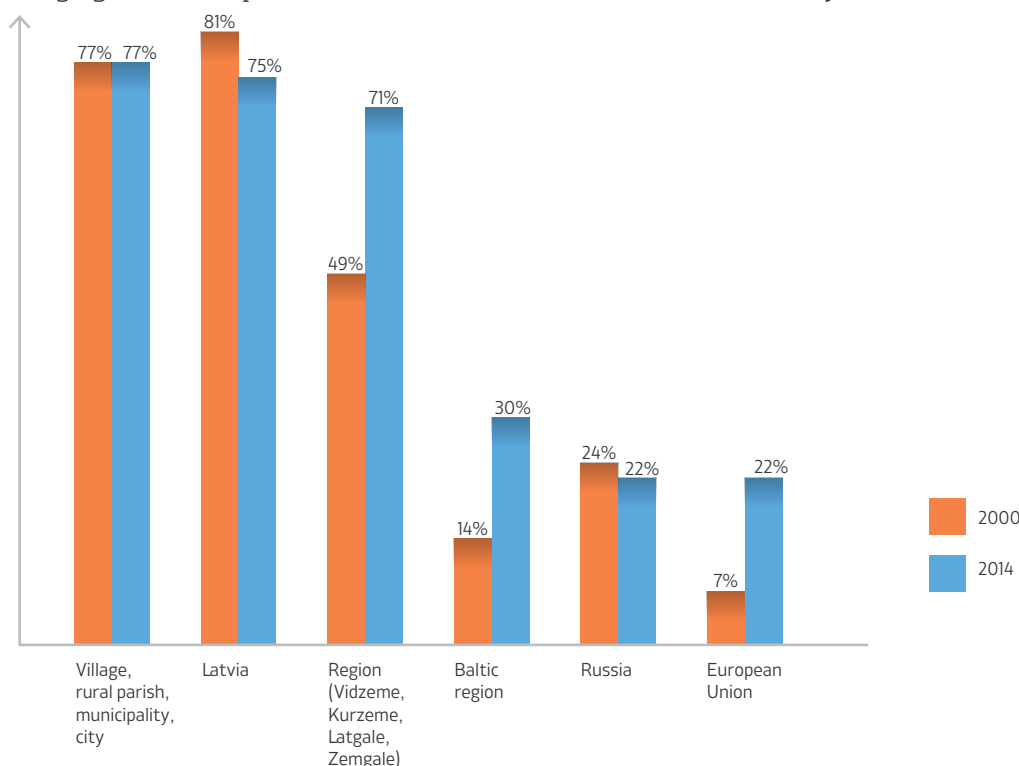


Figure 59. The sense of belonging of ethnic minority respondents. The answers "close" and very close" were combined (in percentages). Statistics: *Ceļā uz pilsonisku sabiedrību 2001*, SKDS 2014

The statistics of the 2014 survey show that currently members of the ethnic minority community feel the closest sense of belonging with the city or town where they live, then with the Latvian state, and that respondents associate their identity with the European Union least. In both surveys, younger respondents (up to age 30 in the 2000 survey and up to age 34 in the 2014 survey) and those with better education express a greater connection with a global identity (with Europe). Older respondents feel a greater connection with Russia. In 2000, members of ethnic minorities associated their identity most of all with their city, with Latvia, and with their nearest surroundings, but only minimally with Europe or the Baltic countries; this has now certainly increased. In this survey, Latvia's non-citizens were also asked about their sense of belonging to Latvia's society, with 67% of respondents stating "more likely yes", 23% stating "more likely no", and 10% stating "not sure / no answer". In the 2014 SKDS survey regarding a sense of belonging, feelings of patriotism that members of the ethnic minority community felt towards Latvia were ascertained: 63% considered themselves to be Latvian patriots (22% stating "I definitely am", 41% stated "I'm more likely to be"), 9% responded that they were not Latvian patriots, and 14% responded that they were more likely not to be patriots; 14% had no opinion. These statistics also show changes in the attitudes of members of Latvia's society concerning their place in the present-day world; this outlines trends occurring along with a generational shift, while not focusing solely on the language situation and language policy.

Every individual's role  
in expanding the use of  
Latvian

The survey results show that linguistic stereotypes continue to exist, and that overcoming these is not an easy task, as they are quite resilient against change and function to maintain inequality within society (Garrett 2010, 72). Improvements in the Latvian language proficiency of members of the ethnic minority community are ensured by their belief and desire to speak Latvian; however, they not infrequently encounter a conversation partner with an unresponsive attitude. This is shown by the earlier described situation in government institutions as well as in other communication situations, for example, in 31% of cases in medical care facilities, when a member of the ethnic minority community asks a question or makes a request in Latvian, the answer is given in Russian; the same is true in 35% of cases on the street, in shops, and in various other service locations. Taking into account that one of the aspects forming linguistic attitude is every language speaker's individual experience in various communication situations (Baker, Prys Jones 1998, 178; Schüppert, Hilton, Gooskens 2015, 376), it is precisely in these types of moments that it is possible to change linguistic behavior. Therefore, it is fundamental to speak Latvian with everyone who wishes to do so. No particular government document or law will directly help to change this situation, only every Latvian's personal linguistic behavior can change and expand the use of Latvian: "Every Latvian must realize that they must be an ambassador for their native language and must always think about which language they are speak with their neighbor or colleague. The government cannot regulate the use of Latvian in social life from above." (Druvieta 2014)

In order to establish positive preconditions for expanding the use of Latvian (not just based in law, but also those which are the responsibility of every member of society), everyone taking part in these situations must be involved – those who speak Latvian natively as well as those who wish to speak or learn Latvian (Druviete 2010b, 233). As is shown by the statistics of the 2014 LVA Survey, the positive linguistic attitude of members of the ethnic minority community continues to increase; in addition, a clear connection is emerging – the better one's Latvian language proficiency, the more positive one's linguistic attitude (Figure 60). Other studies have also shown that individuals have a positive attitude towards languages they know; this principle works in both directions (see, for example, Kristiansen 2010). The government has invested a great deal of work in ensuring and supporting the process of Latvian language acquisition: the majority of respondents (70%) learned Latvian in school and a large portion of respondents who learned Latvian on various language courses did so specifically on those paid for by the national or local government or by their place of work (69%). Currently, implementing language policy is most topical on the individual level.

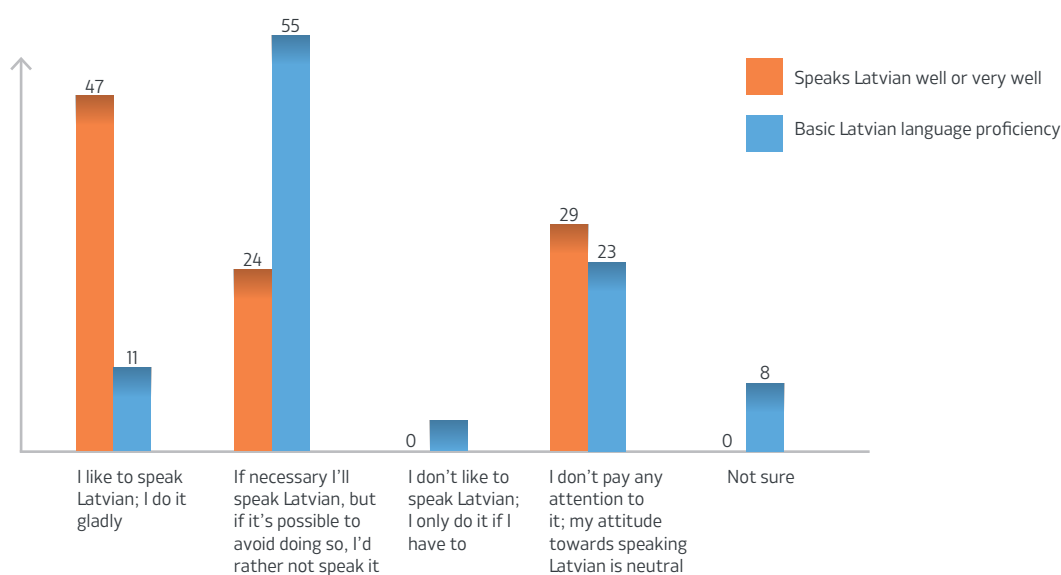


Figure 60. The level of language proficiency and its connection with attitudes towards speaking Latvian (respondents' native language: not Latvian); (in percentages). Statistics: 2014 LVA Survey.

When discussing linguistic attitude, attention also must be directed towards language stereotypes, which do not promote and are more likely to hinder the expansion of the Latvian language environment. Firstly, various language use situations, as described above, involve Latvians themselves not wishing to speak Latvian with members of ethnic minorities who want to speak Latvian. Secondly, there are existing stereotypes and attitudes against all those people who are learning Latvian (Figure 61).

## Stereotypes

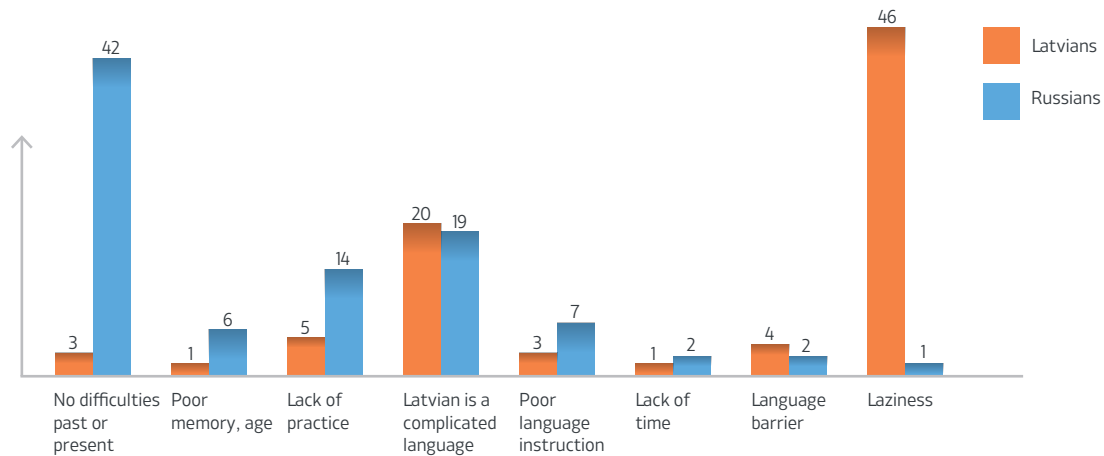


Figure 61. Responses to the question “What difficulties do members of ethnic minorities experience in studying Latvian?” Answers are compared according to ethnicity (in percentages). Statistics: 2012 LVA Survey

One of the most widespread stereotypes is the view that Latvian is an extremely complicated, and therefore difficult, language to learn (Priedīte 2002). Just as with any myth, this one too has its historical roots. According to the opinion of members of the ethnic minority community, no such difficulty exists, but the majority of ethnic Latvian respondents are convinced of the opposite. However, this myth is deeply rooted and has become a general stereotype, and for this reason it is not attributable to a particular group within society. Our own experience has shown that it is possible to successfully challenge a linguistic myth present in society. When bilingual education was introduced in Latvia, many arguments, outdated in the modern world, were made against it, such as the harm to children’s development brought about by learning two or more languages. Active clarification efforts by specialists and agencies involved with language policy, linguists, and teachers successfully challenged this view. Recent surveys conducted over the course of a number of years show that society now believes (independent of the respondents’ native language, ethnicity, or other associations) in the absolute necessity of proficiency in several languages and the importance of this to personal development.

It is much more complicated and important to challenge assumptions concerning specific groups within society than it is to challenge more general assumptions, which may be widespread (and either generally correct or incorrect), but which do not affect any particular part of society in a concrete way (Kristiansen 2001, 137, 142). This, in turn, can generate emotional reactions (which are not always refutable using reason) and fundamentally influence linguistic attitude. Thus, the statistics in Figure 61 show a large gap between mutually held assumptions, which reveal not only linguistic stereotypes, but also show the close connection between mutually held assumptions and stereotypes (linguistic, ethnic, and others) among various groups. To the question of what difficulties are experienced by members of ethnic minorities in studying Latvian, members of this group mostly answered that they did not have any difficulties. However, in the opinion of Latvian respond-

**Differences in beliefs of Latvians and members of the ethnic minority community about each other**

ents, these difficulties are due to the laziness and lack of interest among members of the ethnic minority community. Latvian respondents' answers to this question show their overall opinion and views, which have no basis in language acquisition experience and which is a very superficial and stereotypical assumption. The answers given by members of the ethnic minority community testify to the actual experience they have had during their language acquisition process. These reveal meaningful factors in language acquisition, such as the lack of an environment for language use (14%) and poor instructional quality (7%). These stereotypes continue to maintain a negative linguistic attitude (it should be noted – across all groups in society), which can erupt into various conflicts (Ajtony 2011, 139, 147).

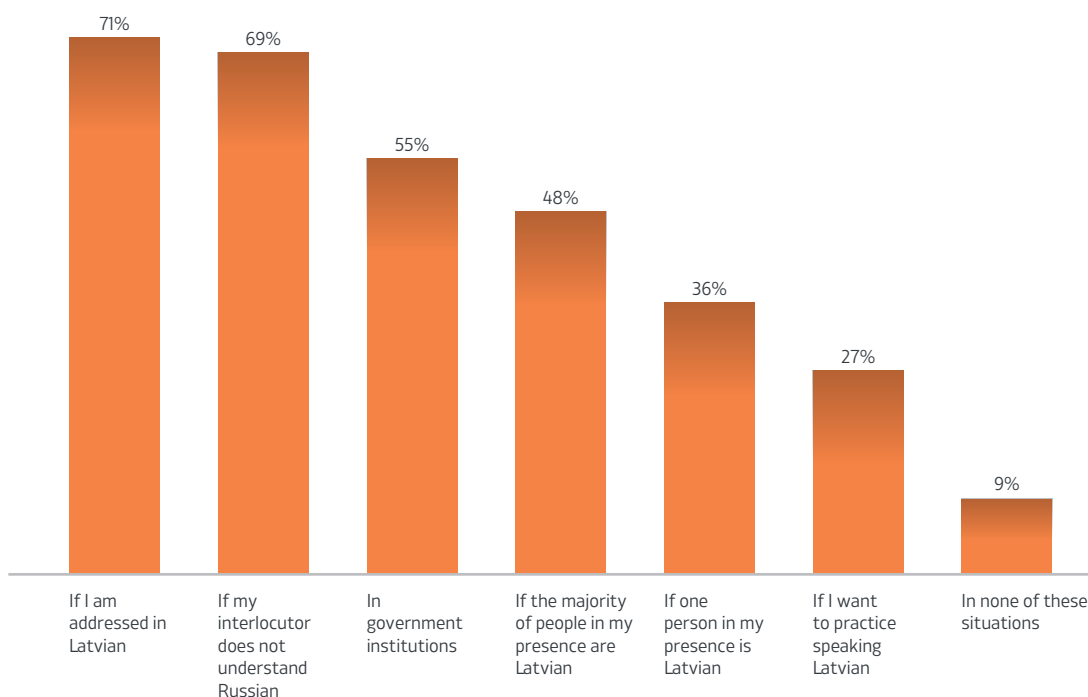


Figure 62. The situations in which members of the ethnic minority community speak Latvian (in percentages). Statistics: *Valoda 2007*

The best way to promote the use of Latvian is to speak Latvian (Figure 62). The problem is not always that a language learner does not wish to study, does not wish to speak Latvian, or does not wish to belong to this society. Statistics indicate that Latvians' own stereotypes and prejudices interfere with the process of successful societal integration. Of course, extreme cases are not analyzed here; however, these are not an indicator that characterize society as a whole.

Positive trends and results gained from language policy implemented up until now are especially visible among younger members of the ethnic minority community (up to age 34): the results from improved language proficiency and indicators of their linguistic attitude are the basis for their desire and opportunities to speak Latvian more often and to a greater extent; this is not because it is specified in normative acts (this is not intended to downplay the significance of

**Indicators of language proficiency and use among young people**

the legal aspect to implementing language policy), but instead because it is gradually becoming a self-evident part, habit, and norm of everyday life. The survey results from younger respondents show not only high quantitative, but also outline positive qualitative indicators:

- the ethnic minority respondents of this age group all spoke Latvian (at various levels of proficiency);
- the majority of young people from the ethnic minority community learned Latvian in school (92%) (compared with 52% of respondents from older generations (above age 55));
- among members of the group composed of younger people from the ethnic minority community, respondents had completely sufficient or sufficient Latvian language proficiency in listening (90%), reading (92%), writing (75%), and speaking (80%) (compared with older ethnic minority respondents (above age 55): listening (60%), reading (61%), writing (41%), speaking (55%));
- the younger the respondent, the more often they learned Latvian through communication with friends (55%) (older respondents: 32%) and more rarely through self-study (10%) (older respondents: 26%);
- the younger the respondent, the more often they used Latvian in all sociolinguistic domains and communication situations;
- the younger the respondent, the more they felt they used Latvian more now than 5-6 years ago (50%) (compared with older respondents: 22%);
- the younger the respondent, the more they liked to speak Latvian or had a neutral attitude in this regard;
- respondents from the youngest generation (all respondents independent of native language or ethnicity) utilized mass media in Latvian more often: most of all the internet (87%) and television (75%); this shows current habits for using present-day information technology as well as future opportunities for expanding the Latvian language environment.

### 3.5. Language use – language future

The quality of language proficiency and positive emotions

Trends in the development of society's linguistic attitude are the result of language policy, which also outlines what is to be done in the future, confirms the significance of linguistic attitude to language management and the role of linguistic attitude in the quantitative increase of language use as well as in the expansion of the language environment. Currently, the main condition for ensuring use of Latvian corresponding to its status as the state language is the desire and opportunity to speak Latvian. From the perspective of an implementer of language policy, this is a complicated task, which is dependent on many factors existing outside of

language (economic well-being and interests, historical stereotypes within society, and others). These factors significantly influence society's linguistic attitude and linguistic behavior.

The quality of language proficiency in particular has a primary role in establishing a positive linguistic attitude towards Latvian. However, along with an increase in language proficiency, both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, good feelings form first – precisely on an individual level – from one being able to speak and then actually speaking Latvian. Going forward, this also influences the individual and leads him/her to identify with a more broadly defined group within society.

A meaningful factor in the context of societal integration is the cooperation and participation of various groups within society. For example, Latvians, as native speakers, must choose strategies promoting positive cooperation in communication situations: it should become a habit to support and encourage all those individuals learning or wishing to speak Latvian, instead of condemning them for mistakes, considering others as lazy, or changing the language of communication due to a misunderstanding of what constitutes tolerance. In the 2014 LVA Survey, members of the ethnic minority community indicated that Latvian language use was promoted and a positive attitude was created specifically as a result of speaking in Latvian, the desire by other people to speak Latvian, showing understanding towards those who are still learning Latvian, and a positive attitude among people.

Many of the preconditions for Latvian language use have been reached: language proficiency is sufficient, with especially positive indicators (in terms of proficiency and also linguistic attitude) existing among young people, members of the ethnic minority increasingly identify themselves as belonging to Latvia, a positive linguistic attitude is gradually entrenching itself, and so on. However, certain domains where the use of other languages is high (the dominance of Russian on television) and other questions are to still be regulated with the help of legal mechanisms and through the education of society.

In the future, increasing the use of Latvian will be achieved by encouraging the development of a positive linguistic attitude and utilizing considered action focused on the needs of specific target groups for further developing Latvian language proficiency in various ways. These include continuing to develop the system for language acquisition and the improvement of proficiency (different levels of courses, teacher training, review of language acquisition methods, accommodating the needs of different target groups, and so on), adapting normative acts to the actual situation, also ensuring the place of Latvian in present-day information technology. However, only the involvement of society in these processes can encourage a comprehensive use of Latvian. The speed with which language change can occur in circumstances characterized by language competition can be seen in the situation of Latvian in the Latvian diaspora, where the value of Latvian language proficiency and the position of Latvian as a component of ethnic identity is unfortunately disappearing very quickly.

**Involving society  
in expanding the use  
of Latvian**





# **LATVIAN AND LANGUAGE COMPETITION IN THE DIASPORA (EMIGRANT COMMUNITY)**

(Evija Kļave, Inese Šūpule)

Research  
into the Latvian diaspora

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the population of Latvia has decreased by 9.1% (Hazans 2013, 66). This decrease has been influenced by demographic processes as well as by those connected with long-term emigration (CSP 2015). In terms of numbers, the largest emigration occurred between 2004 and 2010 when approximately 200,000 people left Latvia (Hazans 2011, 76). Emigration has decreased in recent years; however, every year several tens of thousands of Latvian nationals leave Latvia.<sup>1</sup> For an extended period of time, Latvia lacked any systematic studies grounded in statistics regarding the lives of those Latvian nationals who had emigrated; however, in recent years, the number of researchers studying the Latvian diaspora continues to expand. One of the most extensive studies devoted to researching the life of the diaspora is the study *Latvia's emigrant communities: national identity, transnational relationships, and the politics of the diaspora* (*Latvijas emigrantu kopienas: nacionālā identitāte, transnacionālās attiecības un diasporas politika*) (henceforth, *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (*Latvia's emigrant communities 2015*)), which was conducted in 2014–2015 by a research group from the Philosophy and Sociology Institute of the University of Latvia.<sup>2</sup> The Latvian language situation in the diaspora is analyzed based on the statistics from this study.

The Latvian language is one of the fundamental components of Latvian national identity and to which special attention is devoted in language policy as well as in planning documents relating to the diaspora and remigration policies: *Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015–2020* (*Valsts valodas politikas pamatnostādnes 2015.–2020. gadam*), 2014; *Guidelines for national identity, civic society, and integration policy 2012–2018* (*Nacionālās identitātes, pilsoniskās sabiedrības un integrācijas politikas pamatnostādnes 2012.–2018. gadam*), 2012; *The Plan for Measures Supporting Remigration 2013–2016* (*Reemigrācijas atbalsta pasākumu plāns 2013.–2016. gadam*), 2013; *Action Plan* (*Rīcības plāns*), 2014. How does knowledge and use of Latvian change after moving out of Latvia? How is it influenced by competition with other languages? What importance is given by parents to their children's Latvian language proficiency and its maintenance? How is Latvian maintained when living outside of Latvia? Answers to these questions are given in this chapter based on the most extensive and multifaceted survey data of emigrants from Latvia available to date.

This chapter characterizes language (Latvian, Russian, English, the language of the country of residence) competition and the Latvian language situation in the Latvian diaspora, based on the experience, assessments, and opinions of the members of the diaspora themselves. Three main questions are examined:

<sup>1</sup> According to CSP statistics, 25,163 residents of Latvia left Latvia in 2012, 22,561 left in 2013, 19,017 left in 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The ESF project *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas: nacionālā identitāte, transnacionālās attiecības un diasporas politika* (*Latvia's emigrant communities: national identity, transnational relationships, and the politics of the diaspora*) No. 2013/0055/1DP/1.1.1.2.0/13/APIA/VIAA/040. The project was conducted by the Philosophy and Sociology Institute of the University of Latvia.

- 1) self-assessment by emigrants of their proficiency in different languages;
- 2) language use at home, where language can be chosen freely, as opposed to in public spaces;
- 3) the maintaining of children's Latvian identity abroad – attending Latvian school and diaspora summer camps, the practice of Latvian language acquisition and maintenance.

The first two questions are analyzed looking at the situation before and after emigration, and in this way show how emigration has impacted on language knowledge and use.

The analysis of the diaspora Latvian language situation is, first of all, based on quantitative results from a survey of emigrants from Latvia conducted between August and October 2014. 14,048 Latvians and Latvian nationals currently living in 118 countries participated in the survey. The greatest number of survey participants lived in the United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Norway, the USA, and Sweden; however, participants in the survey also included members of the diaspora living in more exotic countries including Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Zimbabwe. Quantitative data were collected using an internet survey and the limitations of this method must be taken into account with respect to the analysis and interpretation of these data; these limitations are connected with the representativeness of the survey sample. To be able to connect these data to emigrant Latvian nationals as a whole, data were statistically weighted according to a specially designed methodology utilizing data and multifactor data imputation from the OECD, Eurostat, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Republic of Latvia (Latvijas Republikas Pilsonības un migrācijas lietu pārvalde) and the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics.

At the same time, in order to give a deeper interpretation of particular aspects characterizing the diaspora Latvian language situation, qualitative data are utilized in this study: from 90 in-depth interviews from five different countries – the United Kingdom (13), Germany (22), Sweden (10), Norway (15), the USA (15) – along with 18 interviews with remigrants (Latvian nationals who have returned to Latvia after a number of years spent as emigrants). In the interviews, emigrants and remigrants discussed their experience of Latvian language use outside of Latvia, and Latvian language weekend school activities, including participation in these. They also discuss the support necessary for regaining Latvian language proficiency and further developing this proficiency after their return to Latvia.

#### **4.1. Language proficiency before and after emigration**

The emigrants from Latvia gave a self-assessment of their proficiency in Latvian, Russian and English before and after emigration. If in the respondent's country of residence, the dominant language was neither Russian nor English,

**The methodology  
of the study**

**Language proficiency  
self-assessment**

but was instead, for example, German, French or Norwegian, then they had to evaluate their proficiency in that language. Further analysis utilized responses from respondents whose ethnicity was Latvian. In interpreting these statistics, it is important to take into account, first of all, that on the survey form everyone chose for themselves what ethnicity to indicate, and, second of all, in many Western countries the understanding of ethnicity differs from how it is understood in Latvia. As a result, in living abroad, one group of Latvian nationals, those whose native language was Russian, encountered an identity problem: in the countries where they were living, local residents considered them to be Latvians, and some of this group also came to consider themselves to be Latvians as a result (not in the sense of their ethnicity, but in the sense of their nationality), although this does not correspond to how ethnic affiliation is understood in Latvia.

Before emigration, 1% of all the surveyed Latvian emigrants considered their Latvian language proficiency to be weak, 2% considered it to be average, 11% considered it to be good, while 86% indicated that Latvian was their native language (Figure 63).

Before emigration, 10% of the survey participants considered Russian to be their native language, 62% considered their Russian language proficiency before emigration to be good, 14% said it was average, but 14% also regarded it as weak (Figure 63).

Before emigration, 50% of the surveyed Latvian nationals considered their English language proficiency to be good, 23% said it was average, and 27% considered it to be weak.

Assessments offered for proficiency in the dominant languages of countries where Russian or English are not dominant (for example, German in Germany or Swedish in Sweden) reveal that proficiency in these languages before leaving Latvia was comparatively weaker than in the aforementioned languages. 31% of the survey's respondents considered their proficiency to be weak, 20% said it was average, 48% considered it to be good, and 1% indicated that this language was their native language.

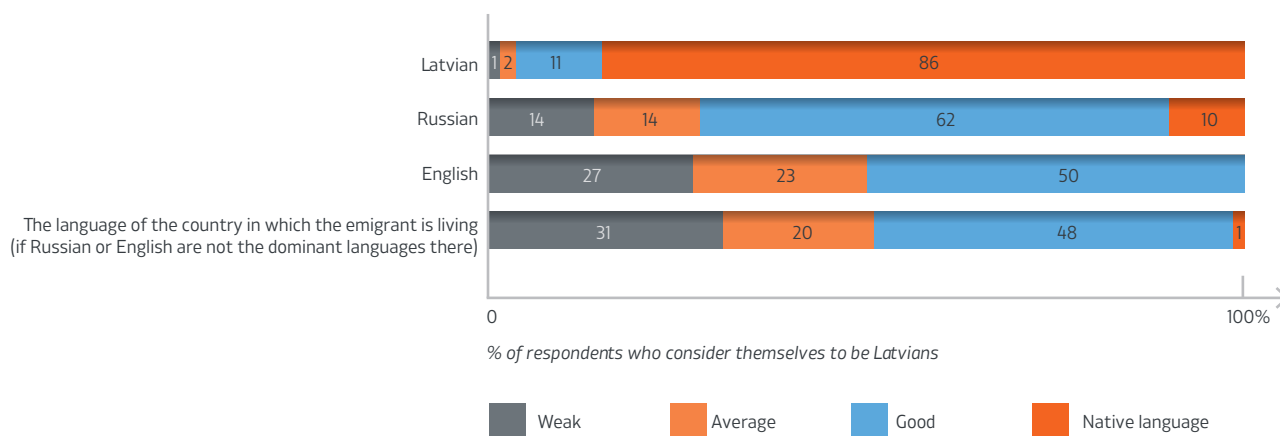


Figure 63. Self-assessment of emigrant language proficiency before leaving Latvia (in percentages). Statistics: Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015 (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

Comparing the proficiency of Latvian emigrants in these languages before emigration, it becomes clear that they had the poorest knowledge of their new home country's language if it was not Russian or English. Apart from those identifying themselves as native speakers of these languages, proficiency in Russian was assessed as being relatively high (62% assessed their proficiency as good), followed by English (50% assessed their proficiency as good).

The situation with respect to language proficiency fundamentally changes while living as an emigrant. First of all, let us consider how Latvian language proficiency changes among Latvians. The survey data show that while living outside one's country of origin (in this case – outside of Latvia), one's subjective attitude towards one's native language can change. Most likely, this is an indicator of the powerful influence of language environment and language practice. First of all, let us consider how Latvian language proficiency changes among Latvians.

Only 10% of respondents indicated that Latvian was their native language. Correspondingly, compared to the assessment of Latvian language proficiency before emigration, the proportion of those living as emigrants who considered their Latvian proficiency to be good had increased and constituted 83% of respondents. An average proficiency rating was given by 4% of ethnic Latvian emigrants, but 3% rated their proficiency as poor. Comparing the assessments of Latvian language proficiency given by Latvian emigrants before and after emigration, it can be seen that language proficiency decreases while living outside of Latvia (Figure 64).

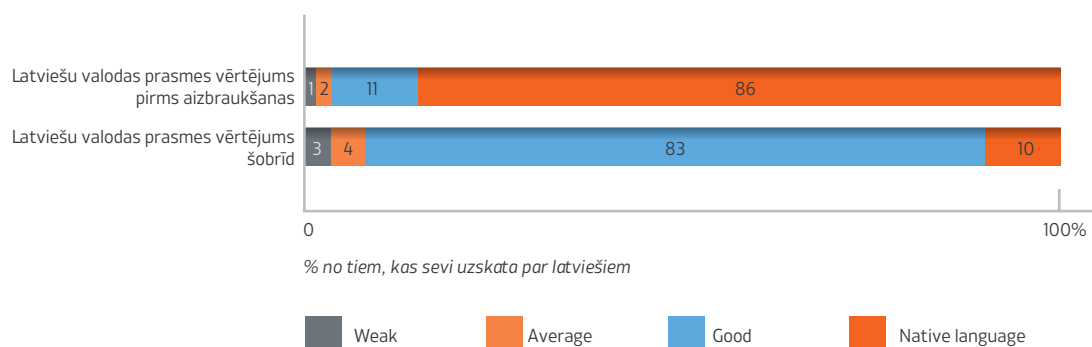


Figure 64. Self-assessment of Latvian language proficiency before and after emigration (in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

Comparing assessments before and after emigration, we can see that the proportion of those giving a negative assessment (poor or average proficiency) increased by 4%. The proportion of those giving a positive assessment significantly increased: from 11% to 83%, while there was also simultaneously a considerable decrease in the proportion of those Latvian emigrants who considered Latvian to be their native language.

Proficiency in other languages also changed. The survey data show that while living as emigrants, respondents' proficiency in English, and other languages of their home country, increased (Figure 65). Before emigration, 50% considered

their English proficiency to be good; while living as emigrants, 68% gave this assessment. Similar indicators can be seen for proficiency in other languages. While living in Latvia, 48% of those surveyed assessed their proficiency in the language of their future home country as good, but after a period living as emigrants, this rating increased to 69% of respondents. Correspondingly, the proportion of those respondents assessing their proficiency in English or other languages as average or poor decreased.

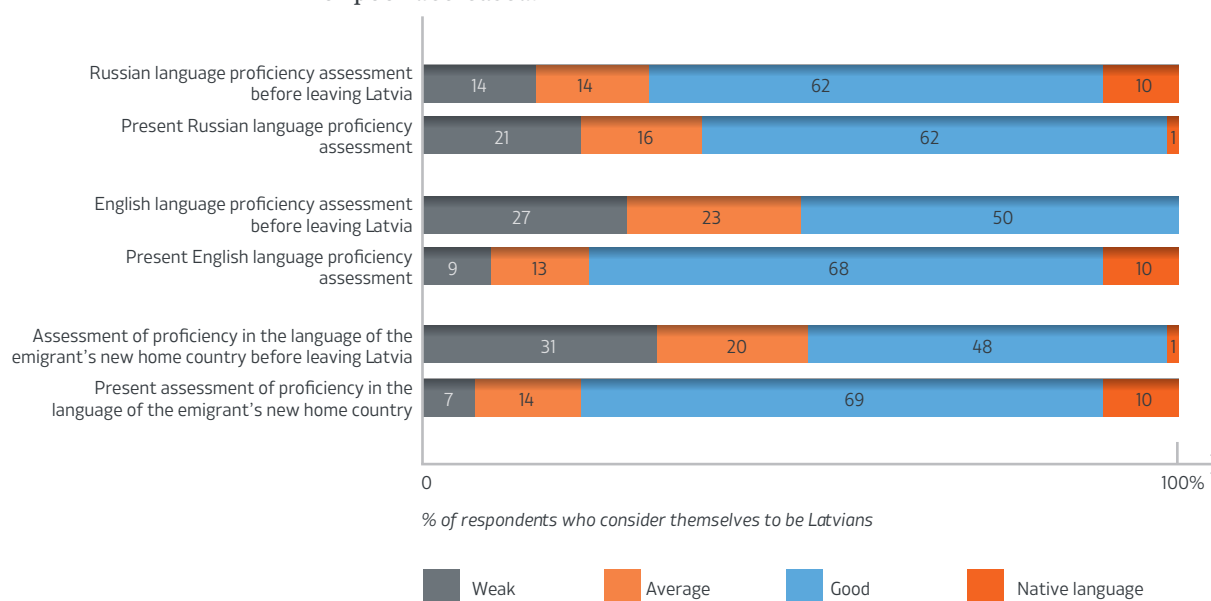


Figure 65. Self-assessment of proficiency in other languages before and after emigration (in percentages). Statistics: Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015 (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

#### Language proficiency by age group

At the same time, Russian language proficiency during the period spent away from Latvia slightly decreased, which is evidenced by the increase in the proportion of respondents who rated their Russian language proficiency as poor: 14% of respondents gave this rating before emigration and 21% did so at the time of the survey. The proportion of those who assessed their Russian language proficiency as good remained stable (62%, both before emigration and at the time of the survey). At the same time, the proportion of emigrants who considered Russian to be their native language decreased by 9%.

Analyzing changes in language proficiency among Latvian emigrants by age, it can be concluded that before emigrating, the assessment of Latvian language proficiency does not differ significantly among age groups. The distribution of responses is similar to the previously described combined assessment: in assessing their Latvian language proficiency, 88% to 90% of respondents of various age groups indicated that Latvian was their native language, while 9% to 13% assessed their proficiency as good. After a period spent as emigrants, these assess-

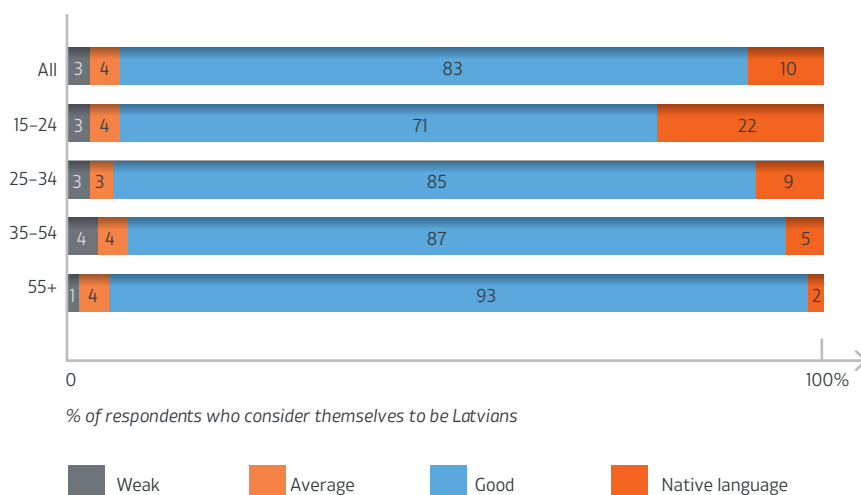


Figure 66. Assessment by age group of Latvian language proficiency while living abroad as an emigrant (in percentages). Statistics: Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015 (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

ments are no longer the same across all age groups (Figure 66) and differed most of all with respect to those who considered themselves to have native language proficiency in Latvian.

The largest proportion of Latvian emigrants who continued to speak Latvian at a native language level was specifically the youngest age group (ages 15-24), with 22% of respondents living outside of Latvia saying that they did so. In other age groups, this rating was much lower: 9% for ages 25-34, 5% for ages 35-54, and only 2% for age 55 and older. Correspondingly, the proportion of young people assessing their Latvian language proficiency as good (71%) was also lower, while 85% to 93% of respondents from other age groups above the age of 25 gave this assessment. This situation can be explained by there being a large number of temporary and recent emigrants among young people, many of whom have come to their country of residence in order to study and will, possibly, return to Latvia after their studies and thereby keep Latvian as a meaningful component of their national identity. In other words, they have high standards for assessing their own proficiency.

A different picture can be seen with respect to other languages (Figure 67). Before emigrating, Latvian emigrants between the ages of 35 and 54 (81%) and above the age of 55 (88%) assessed their Russian language proficiency most often as good, and 36% of young people (aged 15-24) and 59% of emigrants aged 25-34 assessed their proficiency at this level. The opposite situation can be seen in the assessment of English language proficiency – as the age of the respondents increased, the proportion of those giving an assessment of a higher level of proficiency decreased. Up to age 24, 63% of respondents assessed their English language proficiency as good, while only 21% of respondents above the age of 55 did so.

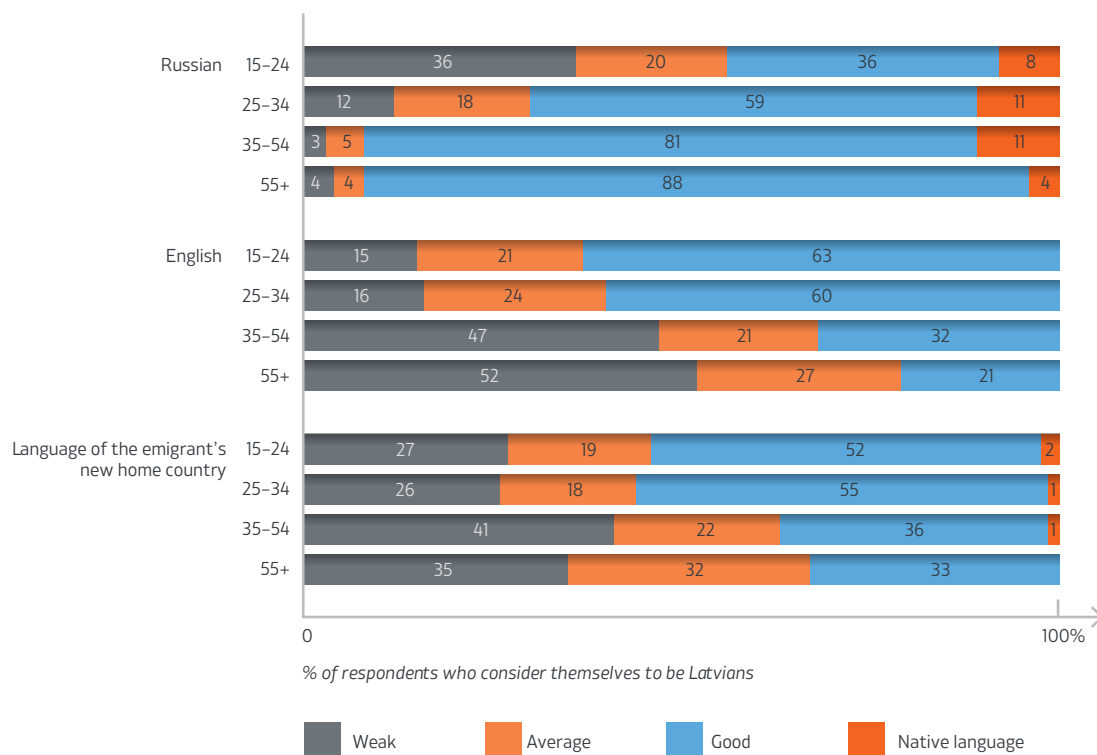


Figure 67. Assessment by age group of proficiency in other languages before emigration (in percentages). Statistics: Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015 (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

The study shows that when living outside of Latvia, proficiency in different languages changed across different age groups (Figure 68). The level of Russian language proficiency showed no significant changes among young and middle-aged respondents (aged 25 to 54), when a comparison was made between proficiency assessments given before leaving Latvia and while living as emigrants. At the same time, the proportion of the senior group (aged 55 and above) assessing their proficiency as "good" decreased from 88% to 47%.

English language proficiency improved across all age groups. It was weakest for respondents aged 35 to 54: in this group, 56% of respondents assessed their English language proficiency as good (before emigration, this was 32%). Taking into account the data from the more detailed interviews, this can be explained to a certain extent by the fact that economically active emigrants have little time for contact with local residents. In addition, it is common for these individuals to be working with other emigrants from Latvia, the Baltic countries, or Eastern European countries in situations where they use Latvian, Russian, or incorrect English for communication. A number of remigrants from the United Kingdom and Ireland acknowledged in interviews that their English language proficiency had not markedly improved, explaining this as the result of the rote pattern of daily life ("home – work – home") and of the lack of money or time to become

The significance of daily lifestyle to language acquisition

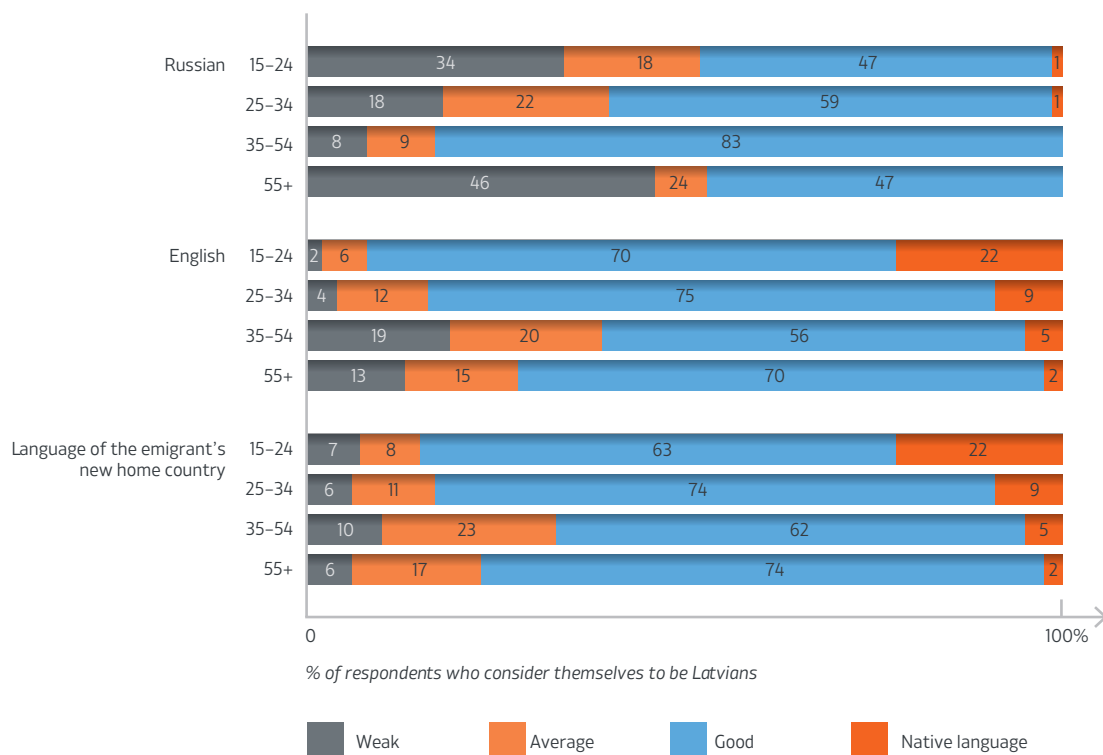


Figure 68. Assessment of proficiency in other languages by age group while living abroad as an emigrant (in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

involved with community activities and to form contacts with local residents in their home country as a means for improving their language proficiency. At the same time, only a relatively small amount of vocabulary must be learned to fulfill the work-related requirements of, for example, working as a waiter. This is clearly illustrated by one remigrant's experience: "I memorized the menus like little poems. [...] If I was asked what was for dessert, I had learned it like a little poem – that and that, and that, and that. In that restaurant there, how much are you really going to be talking. There were Slovaks, Latvians, Poles. They don't speak English like the Irish do." <sup>3</sup>

It is interesting that for all language groups, with the exception of Russian, the proportion of survey respondents who assessed their language proficiency at a native level while living abroad as emigrants remained almost identical (differences were in tenths of percents). 22% of young people assessed their proficiency in Latvian, English, and the language of their home country (if it was not English or Russian) at the level of a native language, 9% of respondents aged 25-34 assessed all of these languages at this level; the same was true for 5% of respondents aged 35-54, and 2% of respondents aged 55 and older.

<sup>3</sup> When quoting the interview respondents, their style of expression is maintained.

**Decrease in Latvian  
language proficiency****The length of time lived abroad as an emigrant and level of language proficiency**

The statistics of the survey of Latvian emigrants shows that the more time is spent outside of Latvia, the weaker Latvian language proficiency becomes (Figure 69). Those Latvian emigrants who had spent 1-2 years living as emigrants assessed their Latvian language proficiency as native in 20% of cases and as good in 78% of cases (before leaving Latvia these ratings were: 88% as native and 11% as good). At the same time, of those who had spent 3-5 years living as emigrants, only 6% assessed their Latvian language proficiency as native, but 90% as good (before leaving Latvia these ratings were: 86% and 12%, respectively). Such statistics are surprising in the sense that in such a short time, the proportion of emigrants who considered Latvian as their native language decreased so significantly. Most likely this indicates not only changes in Latvian language proficiency, but also a change in perception of the meaning of one's native language. The extended interviews with emigrants and remigrants permit one to conjecture that this, possibly, is a sign of linguistic assimilation in the respondents' home country.

If one looks at how levels of Latvian language proficiency assessment change over the long term, it can be seen that only 1% of those Latvians who have lived abroad for more than 10 years consider Latvian to be their native language and 89% assess their Latvian language proficiency as good. As the period of time spent living as an emigrant increases, the proportion of those emigrants who speak Latvian poorly also increases.

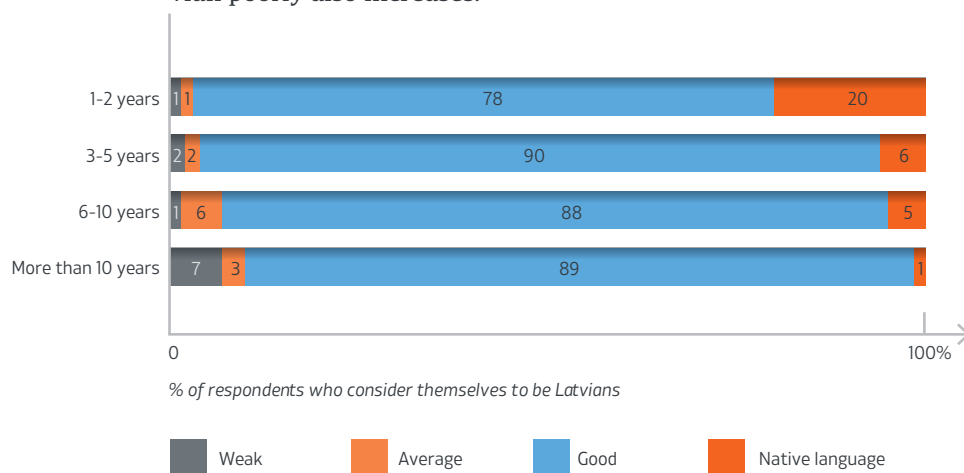


Figure 69. Assessment of Latvian language proficiency and the length of time spent as an emigrant (in percentages). Statistics: Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015 (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

**Increased proficiency  
in the language of the  
emigrant's new home  
country**

The length of time spent as an emigrant has a direct effect on the level of proficiency in English and other languages, with the exception of Russian, spoken in the emigrants' home countries (Figure 70). Independent of the length of time spent as an emigrant, the proportion of Latvian emigrants who assessed their proficiency in Latvian and the language of their home country (including Eng-

lish) as native remained effectively the same.<sup>4</sup> Such assessments indicate that proficiency in Latvian and in the language of the emigrants' home countries is equally high (at the level of a native language).

Before leaving Latvia, English was spoken well by 50% of Latvians who participated in the survey. At the time of the survey, 56% of respondents who had lived outside of Latvia for 1-2 years assessed their English language proficiency as good. This was also the case for 67% of those who had lived outside of Latvia for 3-5 years, 76% of those who had lived outside of Latvia for 6-10 years, and 79% of those who had lived outside of Latvia for more than 10 years. These statistics show what appears to be a correspondence – the more time is spent living outside of Latvia, the better English language proficiency becomes.

A similar picture can be seen with respect to changes in proficiency in other languages spoken in the emigrants' home countries – from before emigration and while living as an emigrant. Before emigration, 48% of Latvians participating in the survey assessed proficiency in the language (not including English or Latvian) of their future home country as good, but after 10 or more years living as an emigrant, this increased to 87% of emigrants.

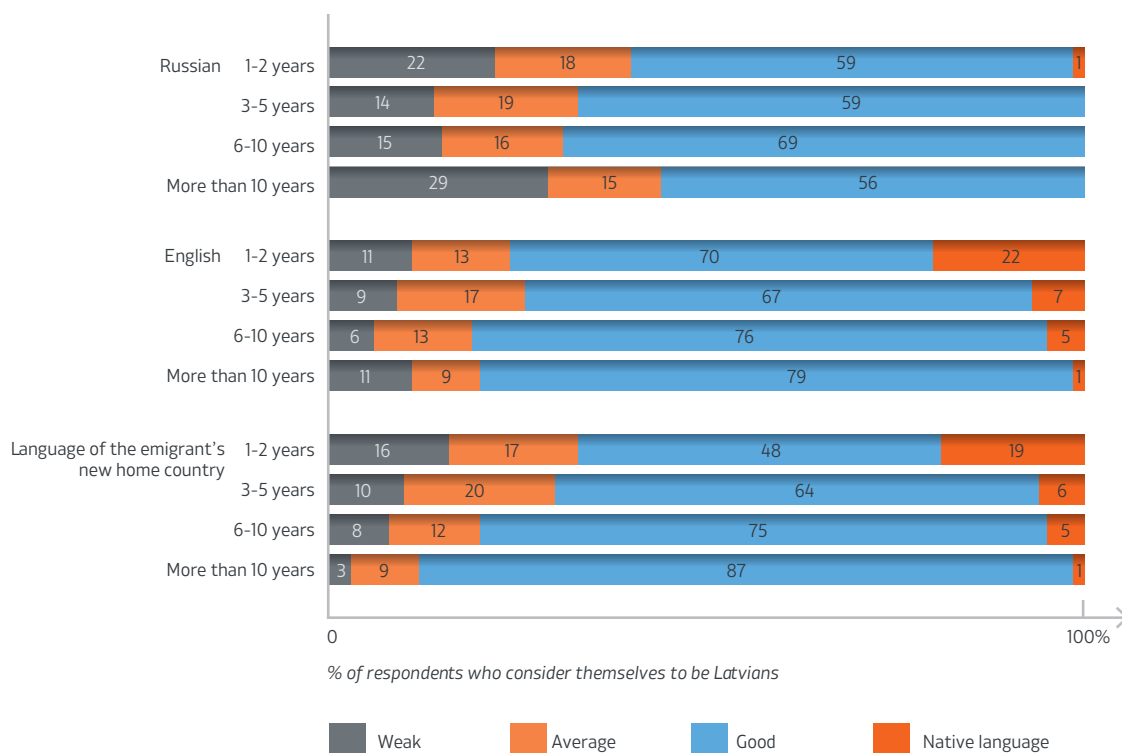


Figure 70. Assessment of proficiency in other languages and the length of time spent as an emigrant (in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Those respondents living in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, the Bahamas, and Russia did not have to separately evaluate their proficiency in the language of their home country on the survey form as they had already done so by evaluating their English and Russian language proficiency, which are also listed as the official or dominant languages of these countries.

**The influence  
of circumstances  
in the work place  
on language acquisition**

Russian language proficiency hardly changed at all, though it did show a trend towards improvement. For example, 57% of those emigrants who had lived outside of Latvia for 1–2 years assessed their proficiency before leaving as good and, at the time of the survey, 59% gave this assessment. Of those who had spent 6–10 years living as emigrants, before leaving 65% assessed their proficiency as very good or good and at the time of the survey 69% gave this assessment. This kind of slight improvement can be explained by the fact that among the survey respondents, there were Latvian emigrants who no longer used Russian in everyday life as well as those for whom it was the language of their home country (Russia). Therefore, the overall assessment of Russian language proficiency evened out. An insight into how to understand the improvement in Russian language proficiency can also be gained from the in-depth interview data. For example, a woman who had lived and worked in Ireland stated that during her time spent living as an emigrant, she had improved her Russian language proficiency because she was working in a Lithuanian company where the common language of communication was Russian: “[...] I improved my knowledge of Russian by using it a lot in practice. So, I came over to learn English, but learned Russian.”

At the same time, it should be pointed out that as the length of time spent living as an emigrant increased, the proportion of Latvians who assessed their proficiency in Russian on the level of a native language decreased. If before leaving Latvia this level was between 7% (for those who had spent 1–2 years living as emigrants) and 13% (for those who had spent more than 10 years living as emigrants), then at the time of the survey this level was at 1% and 0%, respectively.

**4.2. Language use at home before and after emigration****Factors influencing  
language choice within  
the family**

Language use at home was studied not only among Latvian emigrants, but also by expanding the target group and including all Latvian nationals (both citizens and non-citizens). Language use at home is significant, because it is a private space and it has fewer of the limitations on formal language choice than exist outside of the home – at work, in national and local government institutions, to some extent also on the street, in shops, or on public transport. A part of these limitations, including in Latvia, are determined by specific legal regulations within a given country, and a part also by social norms. The language spoken at home is mostly every individual's own choice and, of course, is influenced by the native language and knowledge of other languages of the family and people living in the household. Therefore, in researching these aspects in more depth, several other indications have been taken into account: the ethnicity of the survey respondent and his/her partner/spouse. How language choice at home is affected by the survey respondents' plans regarding returning to Latvia is also examined.

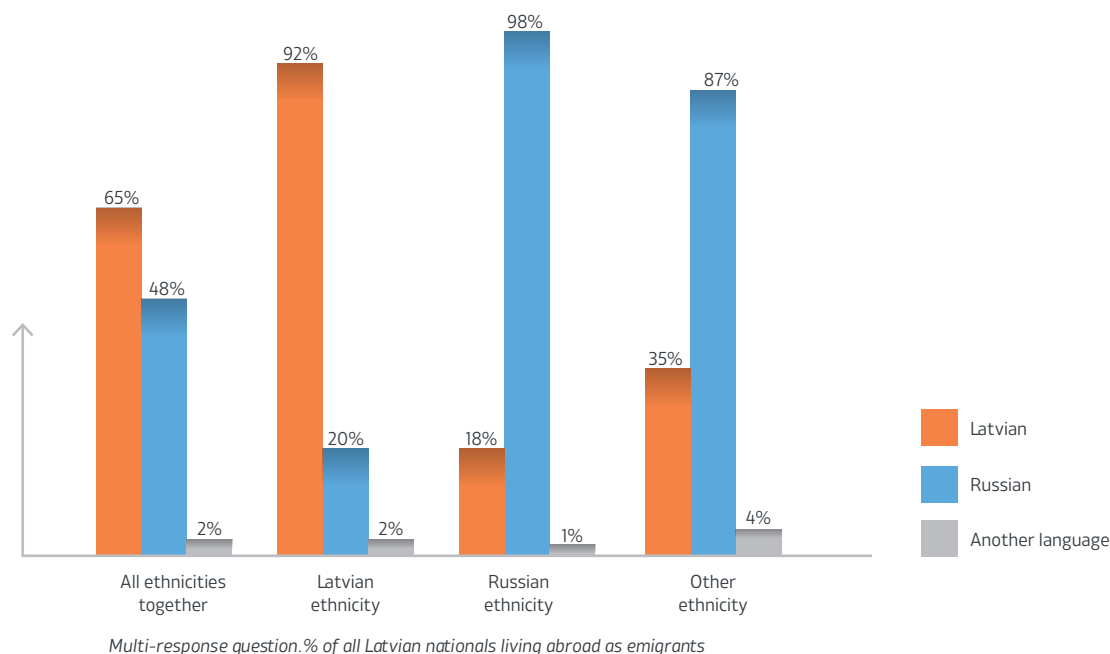


Figure 71. The language used at home before leaving Latvia, by ethnicity (in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015 (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015)*.

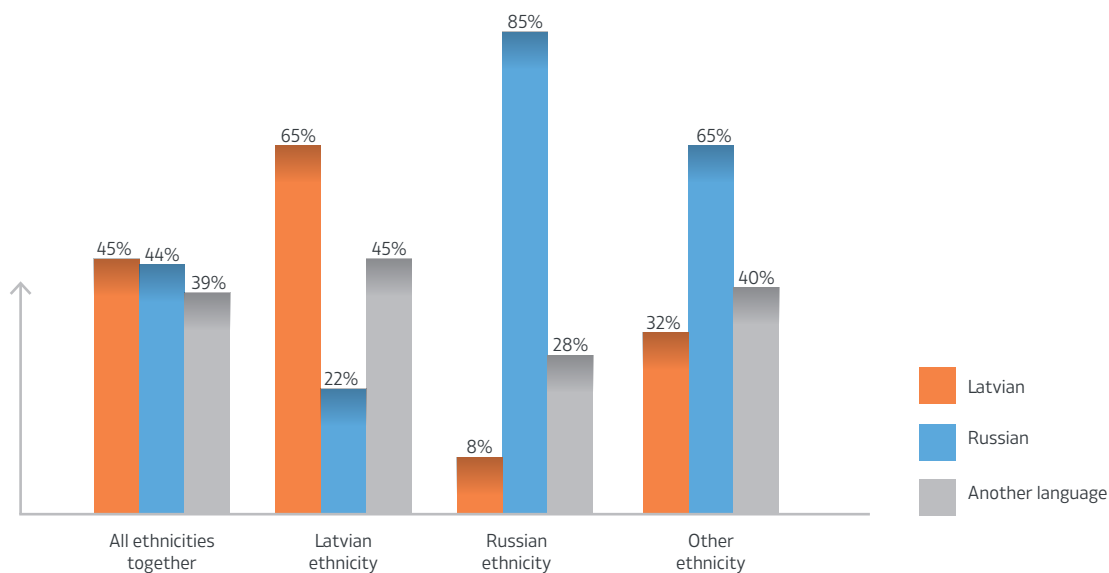
Before leaving Latvia, Latvian was the language used at home in 65% of cases, Russian in 48% of cases, a different language in 2% of cases (Figure 71). It should be noted that the question regarding the language used at home was a multiple-choice question and every respondent could indicate all of the languages used at home.

Examining this question in the context of the respondent's ethnicity (Figure 71), a connection can be seen between ethnicity and the language used at home: 92% of Latvians indicated that they usually spoke Latvian at home, while 98% of Russians indicated that they spoke Russian at home. At the same time, 20% of Latvians indicated that they also spoke Russian at home, while 18% of Russians indicated that they spoke Latvian at home. Representatives of other ethnicities stated that they used Russian at home more often (87%), while 35% stated that they used Latvian before leaving Latvia. In interpreting this data, it should be noted that respondents were able to give more than one ethnicity for themselves in response to this question.

As shown by the survey data, after a period of living as an emigrant, the respondents' language use habits changed. While living in their new home country, 45% of respondents spoke Latvian at home, 44% spoke Russian, and 39% spoke a different language (Figure 72). Survey respondents also had the opportunity to give multiple responses to questions and to choose several languages. These statistics show that the most significant decrease can be seen in the use of Latvian (by 20%), while the decrease in the use of Russian is minimal (only by 4%).

**Ethnicity and the language used at home**

**The decrease in Latvian language use at home**



Multi-response question. % of all Latvian nationals living abroad as emigrants

Figure 72. The language used at home while living as an emigrant, by ethnicity (in percentages).  
Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

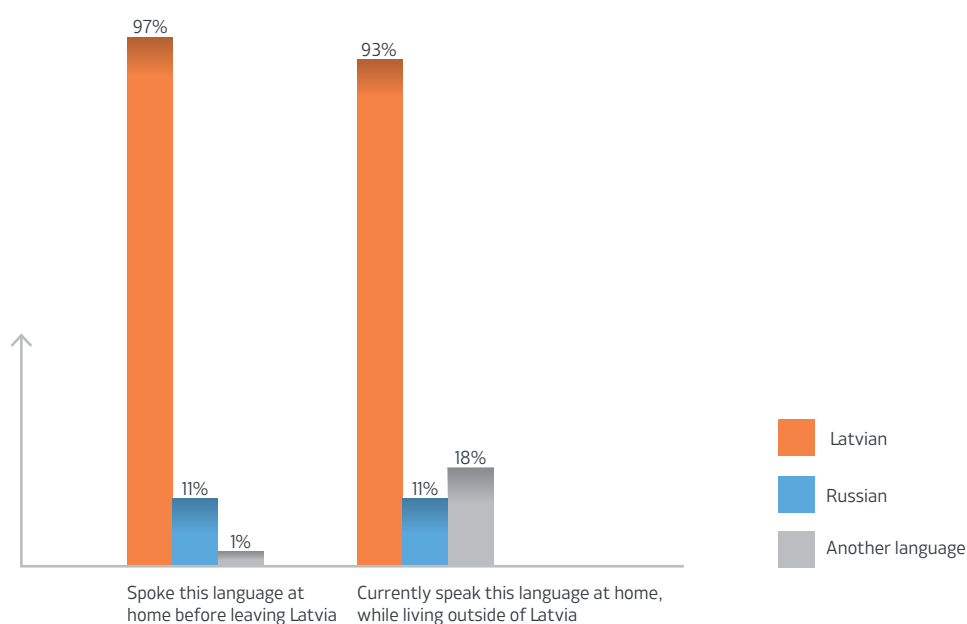
#### Language choice in the family and the ethnicity of the partner/spouse

Comparing language use at home at the time of the survey with language habits before emigration, it can be concluded that the use of other languages, most likely the language of the emigrants' new home countries, increased significantly. Examining language use habits according to the ethnicity of the respondents, the following picture emerges: 65% of Latvians used Latvian as their home language, 22% used Russian, but 45% used a different language. Among Russians, the proportion of emigrants who usually spoke in Russian while living as emigrants remained high (85%) with fewer members of this community using a different language (28%). Among members of other ethnicities, as was the case before emigration, the most often used language was Russian (65%), followed by a different language (40%) and then Latvian (32%).

A deeper understanding of the changes seen in language use habits can be found in the statistics on the ethnicity of the partners/spouses of emigrants from Latvia. Of all Latvian respondents to the survey, 54% had a Latvian partner/spouse, 8% had a Russian partner/spouse, and 38% had a partner/spouse of a different ethnicity. Examining the data based on gender, it can be concluded that it was more characteristic for men rather than women to establish families with Latvians (71%), while women did so in almost equal measure with both Latvians (46%) and members of other ethnicities (47%), with the exception of Russians. Men partnered with women of other ethnicities much less frequently (in only 18% of cases).

In families where both partners were Latvians, there were not any significant changes in language use habits (Figure 73). Before leaving Latvia, Latvian was the

family language for 97% of respondents and after living as emigrants this level decreased only slightly to 93%. In these families, the use of other languages – with the exception of Russian – increased considerably, from 1% before emigration to 18% while living in their new home country. These data indicate the influence of the language environment not only on language use outside of the home, but also in a private space such as the home itself.



Multi-response question. % of those who consider themselves to be Latvians and whose partner/spouse is Latvian

Figure 73. The language used at home before and after emigration: Latvians with a Latvian partner/spouse (percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015 (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015)*.

The more detailed interview data shows that a characteristic feature was the parallel use of other languages by children who attended any type of educational institution. In interviews, parents related that children more often than the parents themselves, who spent their entire day at work, came into contact with local children and adults (for example, teachers) and, therefore, used the language of their new home country more intensively. In addition, the language of their new home country was used not only in contact with local children, but also with other Latvian children, because this was easier for them, due to the fact that vocabulary associated with topics of current interest for children is influenced by the public (i.e., media, language environment) and develops more in the language of their new home country. Therefore, in order to maintain the use of Latvian at home, a number of parents mentioned in the interviews how special rules were made at home regarding speaking only Latvian. This excerpt from an interview provides a

good example: “[My daughters] were four years old, [...] they no longer knew simple words in Latvian even with us having the rule that they had to speak Latvian at home, because when they went to play, they only spoke English [...] They went to school and everything was happening in English for them.”

The situation was fundamentally different for Latvian emigrant families where the spouse/partner was of a different ethnicity (most likely a citizen of the emigrant’s new home country), but not Russian (Figure 74). Before leaving Latvia, 91% of these Latvians usually spoke Latvian at home, but living outside of Latvia, only slightly less than one third of these respondents (28%) spoke Latvian at home. The proportion of Latvian emigrants who usually spoke a different language at home greatly increased (from 4% before emigration to 88% while living as emigrants). These survey results are probably a consequence of the ethnicity of the spouse/partner (and, correspondingly, also his/her native language, which was most often the official or dominant language of that country) and the spouse/partner’s influence on the choice of home language.

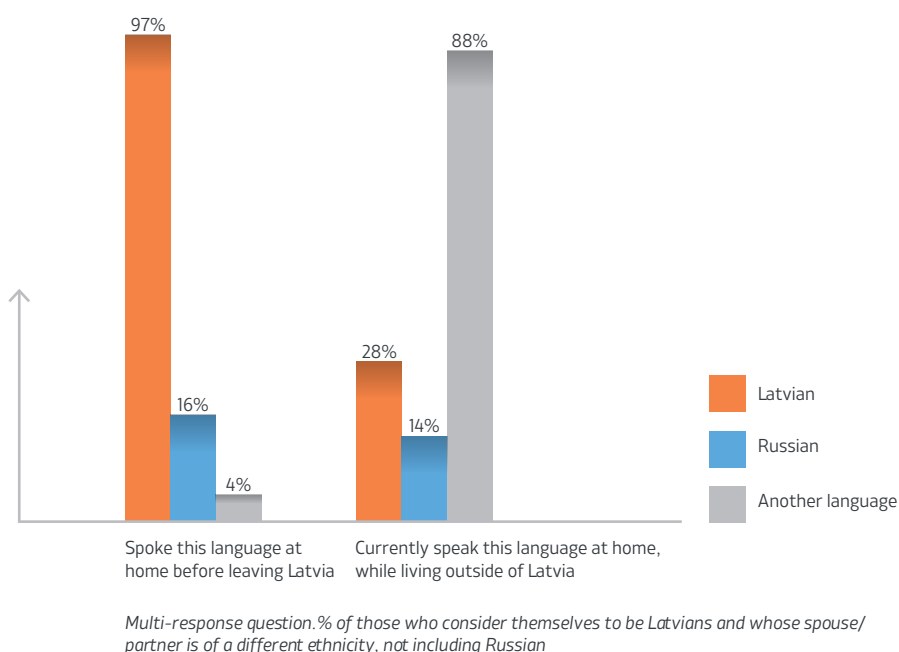


Figure 74. The language used at home before and after emigration: Latvians with a partner/spouse of a different ethnicity, with the exception of Russian (in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015 (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015)*.

#### Differences in language use by gender

As shown by the survey results, an even more considerable influence can be seen among women. As mentioned earlier, Latvian women more often than men chose a spouse/partner of a different ethnicity (a citizen of their new home country). Analyzing the changes in language use habits among women, the statistics show almost an entirely reversed situation before and after emigration:

if before emigration 92% of women mainly spoke Latvian at home, then, when living outside of Latvia with a spouse/partner of a different ethnicity, 91% used a different language and 28% used Latvian. The experience revealed by the more in-depth interviews shows that in mixed families where the woman was Latvian, Latvian was used mainly when speaking with children, in order for them to also learn their mother's language. However, the use of several languages within such families demands effort and a great motivation both from the mother and the children, therefore, in the long term it is not always possible to maintain.

Among Latvian men, similar changes in language use habits can be observed, though to a lesser extent than among women. 83% of men surveyed indicated that before leaving Latvia they used Latvian at home, 27% used Russian, and only 4% used a different language. However, living outside of Latvia with a spouse/partner of a different ethnicity, with the exception of Russian, Latvian was used by only 24% of respondents, and a different language by 71%. An analysis of female and male language use habits allows one to conclude that before leaving Latvia there were not any large differences in the use of other languages and, likewise, there was not a large difference in the proportion of women and men using Latvian living outside of Latvia (28% and 24%, respectively). The main differences can be seen in the language chosen for contact at home after emigration: women used a different language more often than men, while men used Russian more often (34%) than women (10%). This can most probably be explained by the language knowledge of the respondent's partner – for example, in situations where both partners were more proficient in Russian, but with it being neither their native language nor the language of their new home country.

An interesting aspect of the analysis of language use habits of emigrants is the connection between the language chosen for use at home and emigrants' thoughts on the possibility of returning to Latvia. Among surveyed Latvian nationals, 16% planned on returning to Latvia within the next five years and of these emigrants, 63% usually used Latvian at home. 13% of emigrants from Latvia indicated that they did not plan on returning to Latvia and of these emigrants, only 27% usually used Latvian at home, while the proportion of Russian and other language use at home was significantly greater (Figure 75). It should be noted that 14% of the surveyed Latvian nationals (both citizens and non-citizens) planned on possibly returning to Latvia in old age if the appropriate circumstances exist, 40% said they may return to Latvia, while 17% were more likely not to return.

**The language used at home and plans regarding return to Latvia**

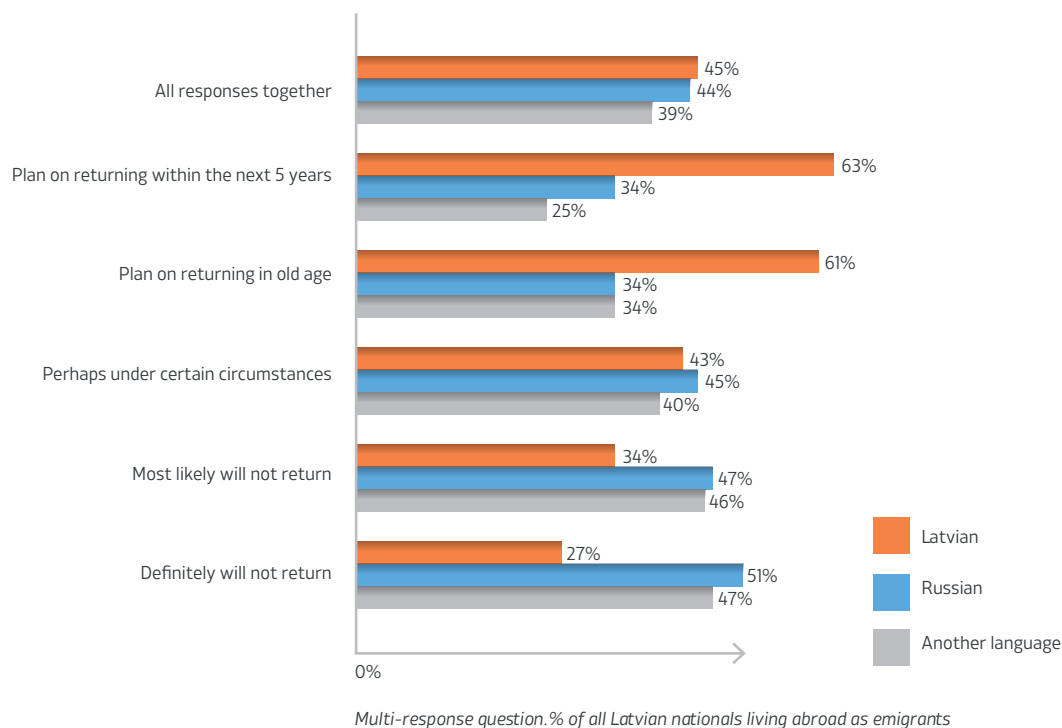


Figure 75. Language use at home, taking into account plans for a return to Latvia (in percentages).  
Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

### 4.3. Support necessary for remigrants to strengthen Latvian language knowledge

**Language proficiency is a significant factor for returning to Latvia**

Support for Latvian language acquisition is one of the eight courses of action detailed in *The Plan for Measures Supporting Remigration 2013-2016* (*Reemigrācijas atbalsta pasākumu plāns 2013.–2016. gadam*). The in-depth interviews with remigrants provided their perspective on the need for this type of support. The majority of remigrants interviewed, and those individuals with experience of returning, positively evaluated support for Latvian language acquisition and for the strengthening this language knowledge. In their responses, the respondents separated their own needs for renewing and reinforcing their Latvian language proficiency and the Latvian language acquisition support needs of remigrating families with partners, spouses, and children whose native language is not Latvian. Providing support for Latvian language acquisition by members of remigrant families was evaluated as especially positive, emphasizing that language can be an obstacle to a family returning to Latvia, if such a decision is made at all: “I know several couples for whom one of the reasons they feel that they can’t or won’t be able to return is specifically that the partner doesn’t speak the language,

he isn't Latvian." In addition, the in-depth interviews with emigrants show that those Latvian nationals who have established families with citizens of their new home countries consider the option of returning permanently to Latvia notably less often.

The respondents felt that there is a need to help not only partners, spouses, and other adult family members learn Latvian, but also children who left Latvia at an early age or were born abroad. Therefore, for families returning to Latvia, support for their children in Latvian language acquisition or its further development is very important: "I think that Latvian language acquisition is very necessary, because the majority that leave and then have children abroad, or leave with small children – very many no longer speak Latvian."

Speaking about themselves, the majority of survey participants who had returned to Latvia stated that they did not have the need for support with Latvian language. However, one remigrant did say that he was currently attending private a Latvian language course to improve his Latvian language proficiency after seven years spent abroad as an emigrant. This difference in experience shows that the need to improve Latvian language proficiency by native speakers is not the same for all individuals. In some cases, there was no feeling that the individual had such a need (this was especially the case for those individuals who had spent a relatively short time living abroad – less than five years). As the time spent abroad increased, this need could become just as important for children who were born outside of Latvia as for those family members who originated in other countries.

Special support for improving Latvian language proficiency is necessary for children who are beginning their studies in schools in Latvia after having lived abroad. According to statistics compiled by the Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija – IZM), in the 2013/2014 academic year, 492 students who had remigrated were studying in schools in Latvia, with the majority of them in Riga. As shown by the survey statistics and in-depth interviews with parents, only very few children attended Latvian weekend schools and, in addition, these children had very little experience of interacting with other children of their own age in Latvian, which is significant when considering their social and psychological adaptation to the school environment in Latvia. One remigrant described it as follows: "First, second, third grade, and the child has studied there in English, support for their Latvian is one hundred percent necessary. If he's just sent to school – 'go learn together with the other children' – he won't be able to keep up at all. He needs to get back his Latvian more intensively, quicker. A part of the children who go to Sunday school learn to write essays, so they learn vowel length marks, punctuation. At least they're taught these very basic things, so that they don't forget them, if their parents support and maintain it. [...] The Latvian language is disappearing. It's not all parents that take [their children] to Sunday school. The parents have jobs and they don't take their children, only a small, small part do."

Help for children is especially important

Difficulties for children returning to Latvia

Latvia's regulatory framework provides support for students who have lived abroad for a time and have returned to Latvia. The Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 149 (28.02.2012.) – Regarding the procedure by which students are accepted into general education institutions and discharged from them, and obligatory requirements for promotion to the next grade (Par kārtību, kādā izglītojamie tiek uzņemti vispārējās izglītības iestādēs un atskaitīti no tām, un obligātajām prasībām pārcelšanai uz nākamo klasi) specifies that if a student has returned from studies in another country and wishes to continue their studies in an educational institution in Latvia, based on documents submitted by parents regarding their child's education and an evaluation conducted regarding the student's educational level, "[this] determines the necessary support activities for a period of at least one semester in school subjects that differ between the education programs of Latvia and those in which the student had previously studied" (Point 24.3).

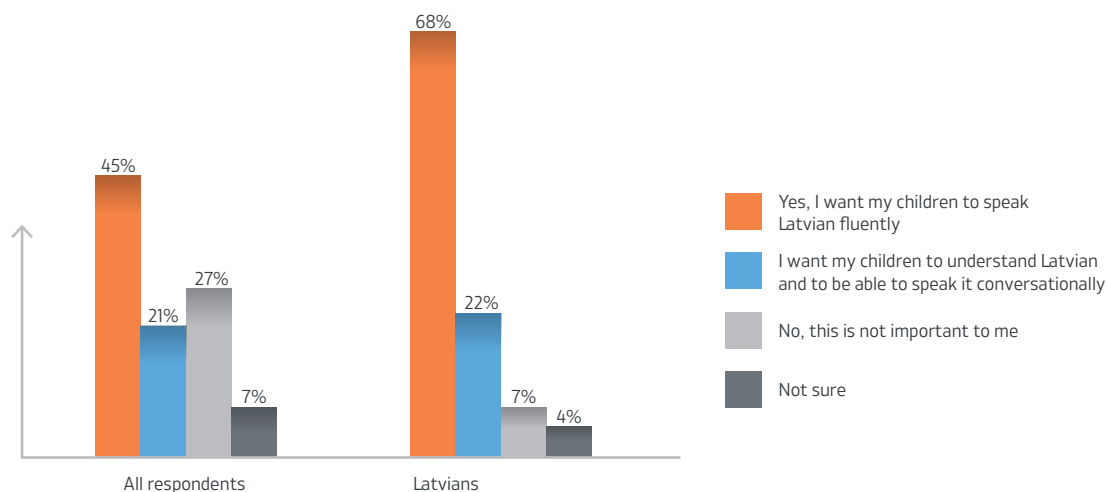
The Latvian Language Agency has been involved in this area. Since 2014, it has organized 36 hours of professional development courses for comprehensive school teachers, focusing on challenges and support for remigrating students. In 2014, these courses were organized for two groups of teachers, each containing 20 teachers. In 2015, these courses were organized for 4 groups, with a total of 79 teachers participating.

#### 4.4. Children from Latvia living as emigrants and the strengthening of their Latvian language proficiency

The increased number  
of children living  
as emigrants

Since 2010, the number of children granted Latvian citizenship who were born outside of Latvia has significantly increased: 2326 children in 2010, 4125 in 2012, 4438 in 2013, 5154 in 2014 (PMLP statistics). This means that the number of Latvian citizens born abroad between 2010 and 2014 increased by 2828, or 55%. In studying the lives of Latvian emigrants abroad, special attention has been devoted to children, in order gain an understanding of the degree of importance parents place on their children knowing Latvian, in what way Latvian is taught to their children and maintained, and how the ethnic (Latvian) dimension of their identity is sustained.

Of all the survey participants (independent of their ethnicity) who had under-age children abroad, 45% indicated that they would like their child or children to know Latvian (among Latvians this was 68%), 21% indicated that they would like their child or children to understand and be able to converse in Latvian (among Latvians: 22%), 27% indicated that it was not important for their children to know Latvian. Among Latvians this indicator was considerably lower – only 7% indicated that their children's proficiency in Latvian was not important to them (Figure 76).



% of Latvian nationals who have underage children living together with them as emigrants abroad

Figure 76. The importance of children's Latvian language proficiency as evaluated by parents (Latvian and other ethnicity emigrants, in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015 (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015)*.

In several cases, parents' desire for their children to learn Latvian as well as speak and study in it has been one of the main reasons for a family to return to Latvia, as shown by the in-depth interviews with remigrants to Latvia. Living abroad, parents have not infrequently observed their children's gradual linguistic assimilation into the society of their new home country. In some cases, when no return to Latvia is planned, it is a conscious strategy of parents to speak with their children in the language of their new home country, not in Latvian, so that they are more quickly assimilated into the new society and become "locals". One woman who had returned to Latvia told the following story: "Others over there [in the United Kingdom] very quickly assimilated with the English and then they also think that they are English. One family, two brothers from Ventspils, both also have families. One brother has three children and the other has a little daughter. The one who had the three children, his daughter was in the same class with my daughters. [...] [His] little daughter doesn't speak Latvian. She only speaks English. The oldest boy also doesn't speak Latvian. [...] The girl's mom once came up to me and asked where we're from, said that she is from Ventspils and how many years she'd already lived in England, and that they don't even travel to Latvia, because there's nothing to do there. [...] I watched as those parents spoke English with their children, even the children spoke English with each other, but that doesn't change what you are, even if you speak English, to an English person you will be a Latvian no matter what."

Parents use various methods to sustain their children's sense of belonging to Latvia and Latvian culture and try to develop and reinforce their Latvian language abilities. Latvians devote greater attention to maintaining their children's Latvian identity than emigrants from Latvia do as a whole (Figure 77).

**Support of Latvian language proficiency by parents**

**Parents' efforts to create and maintain Latvian identity**

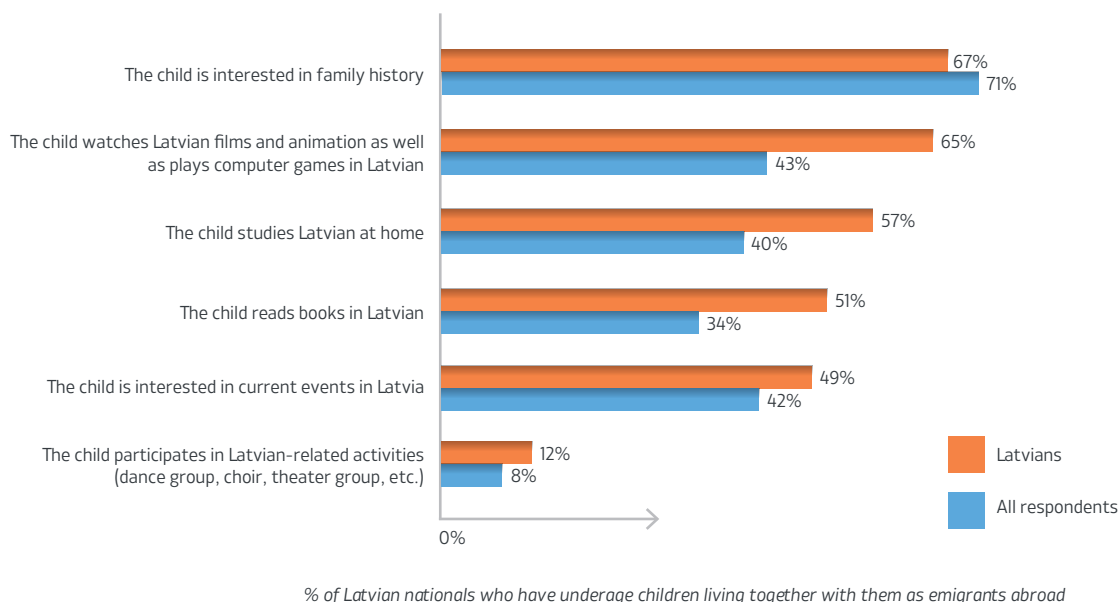


Figure 77. Activities for strengthening the Latvian language and Latvian identity of children (Latvians and emigrants of other ethnicities, in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

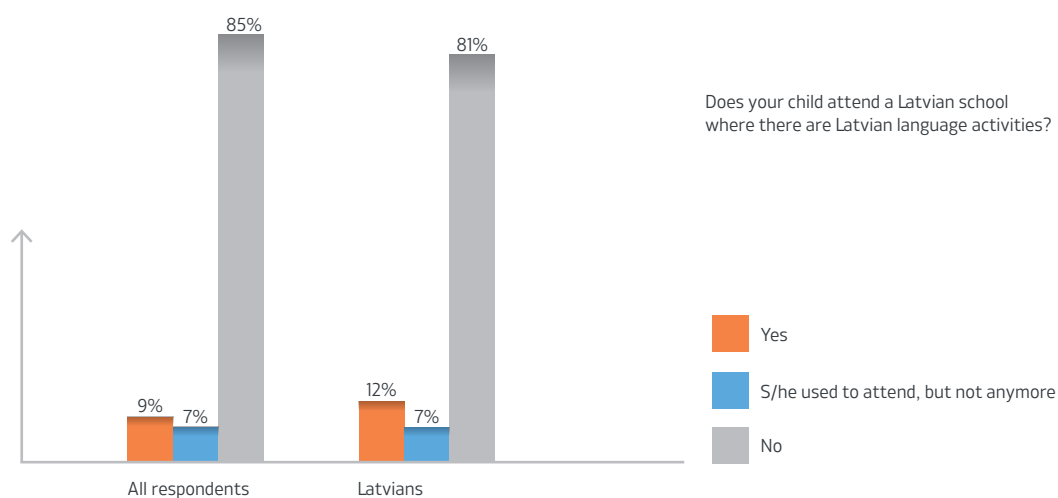
#### Latvian weekend schools

Ethnic Latvian parents stated most often that their children were interested in family history (67%) and watched Latvian art films, animated films and played computer games in Latvian (65%). The next most often mentioned answers were Latvian language acquisition by studying at home (57%) and reading books in Latvian (51%). Parents stated slightly less often that their children are interested in current events in Latvia. Much less frequently – only in 12% of cases – children participated in a group related to Latvian culture (dance groups, choirs, theater groups, and so on). Taking these results into account, the work by the LVA in developing and disseminating materials (including electronic resources) for Latvian language acquisition should be noted, as these resources can be used not only by teachers, but also by parents. Learning materials that can be used at home are especially valuable, because Latvian weekend schools, as discussed in the following sections, are attended by only a very small number of diaspora children.

Latvian weekend schools are a meaningful tool for Latvian language acquisition and the reinforcement of Latvian knowledge for children living outside of Latvia. During the last five years, the number of Latvian weekend schools has noticeably increased outside of Latvia. In 2010, there were approximately 30 Latvian weekend schools, while in 2014, their number had increased to 100 schools; however, this number fluctuates (*Rīcības plāns 2014*, 15). The main government institution ensuring support for Latvian weekend schools is the Latvian Language Agency (Latviešu valodas aģentūra). In addition, this work of planning and implementing support activities is realized in close cooperation with a number of diaspora organizations: the World Federation of Free Latvians (Pasaules Brīvo

latviešu apvienība (PBLA)), the European Latvian Association (Eiropas Latviešu apvienība (ELA)), the Latvian National Council in the United Kingdom (Latviešu nacionālā padome Lielbritānijā), and the Latvian National Council of Ireland (Īrijas Latviešu nacionālā padome). Information about the support by the LVA for Latvian diaspora children is summarized at the end of this chapter.

The LVA organizes methodological courses for diaspora teachers and language learning camps for children, and designs Latvian language learning and methodological tools intended for the diaspora. It also designs Latvian language acquisition programs for the diaspora, giving direct support to weekend schools (with rent for space, insurance for children, transport costs, and so on). During a 2013 competition, 36 weekend schools were selected to receive financial support to cover the cost of renting space, insurance, learning materials, and material costs (LVA statistics). In 2014, financial support was given to 35 schools, and learning and methodological tools were purchased, sent, or distributed along with the newest literature to 100 diaspora weekend schools around the world (LVA statistics).



% of Latvian nationals who have underage children living together with them as emigrants abroad

Figure 78. The experience of attending Latvian weekend schools (Latvians and emigrants of other ethnicities, in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

However, as the survey results revealed, Latvian weekend schools are attended by a total of 9% of all emigrant children from Latvia (12% of children with ethnic Latvian parents), 7% of respondents indicated that their children had at some point attended this type of school, but no longer did so (7% of Latvian children), while 85% of all children and 81% of children with Latvian parents did not attend these schools (Figure 78).

**Latvian weekend school attendance**

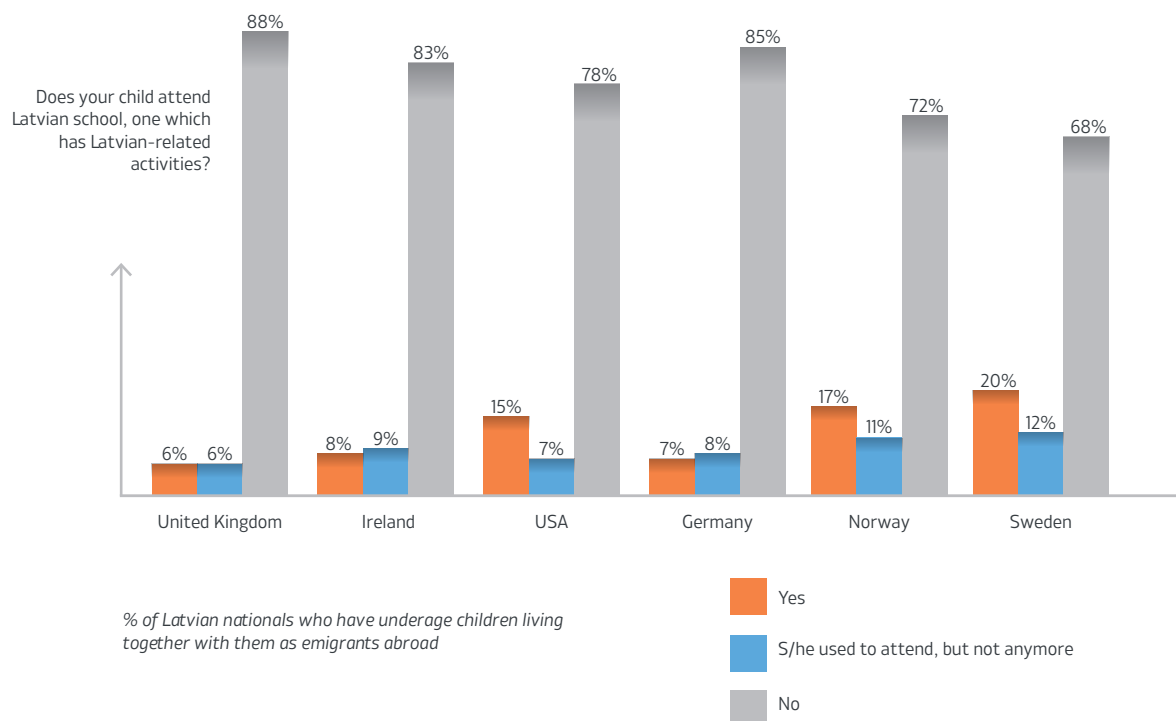


Figure 79. Latvian weekend school attendance in various emigrant countries (all emigrants, in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

#### The reasons for non-attendance of weekend schools

Analyzing the attendance of Latvian weekend school programs in various countries (Figure 79), it can be concluded that these schools were attended most actively by the children of emigrants from Latvia in Sweden, Norway, and the USA (20%, 17%, and 15% gave an affirmative answer). These schools were attended slightly less often by the children of emigrants from Latvia in the United Kingdom, Germany, and Ireland; a negative answer to the question regarding Latvian weekend school attendance was given by 88%, 85%, and 83% of survey participants in these cases.

There are various reasons why Latvian weekend schools are not attended. The survey results show the reasons given among Latvians are the following:

- the parents do not know of such a school or there is no such school nearby (33 %),
- the course content at the school is not suitable for children of a particular age, i.e., the children are still too young or are already too old (29 %),
- the location of the school – it is located far away and the family is not able to get there (23 %),
- lack of interest or lack of need (12 %),
- not satisfied by the course content (6 %),
- lack of time (6 %).

7% of respondents gave other explanations, which show a great deal of diversity. From the answers entered on the survey form: "I don't want the Latvians to ruin my child's love for learning"; "the children aren't Latvian"; "there's no sense studying a language that won't be used"; "we don't plan on returning to Latvia"; "I want the children to feel a part of this place"; "my child already has too much to do"; "there are more interesting activities taking place at the same time"; "my child didn't like it there"; there need to be a minimum of five children nearby for the community to ensure learning in a heritage language"; "we are using distance learning to study Latvian"; "we are teaching our children Latvian at home ourselves"; "my child is attending a Europe school in Brussels where they also teach Latvian"; "my child is attending Russian language activities"; "my child has developmental problems"; "my child doesn't speak Latvian at home, so he is not accepted at the school"; "too expensive"; "the local government financially supports one hour of heritage language instruction per week in their regular school, which is organized and taught by a Latvian language teacher."

From these answers, one can conclude that those parents whose children speak Latvian well, as well as those whose children are already assimilated and do not speak Latvian at all, do not feel a need for weekend schools.

The experience of attending Latvian weekend schools was also studied with the help of in-depth interviews with emigrants and remigrants. A portion of interviewed emigrants stated that Latvian weekend schools were a very significant tool for the formation and maintenance of national identity and Latvian language acquisition. With the exception of within the family, Latvian schools are practically the only environment outside of the home where children use Latvian and meet with Latvians of their own age. They are also able to understand themselves as part of the Latvian nation both as an ethnic and linguistic group: "For the children this is a very good opportunity to meet with other Latvians and be together, but we are also a mixed family. For us it is even more important from the perspective of language and important that our children hear and see that mom isn't the only one who is strange and speaks Latvian, that there are also other people and even other children who speak this way."

Among survey respondents, there were also individuals who had on their own initiative organized the opening of such schools and were actively involved in their operation. However, not all families who wished that their children would regularly attend Latvian weekend school had this opportunity. First of all, schools of this type were not located in or near all cities (the location of the school, distance as obstacles); secondly, in a portion of cases, parents were unable to afford to send their children to these activities.

Another factor influencing whether or not children attended Latvian weekend schools was whether the children came from a mixed family or from a family where both parents were Latvian. It turns out that the family's migration history also has significance, i.e., whether the child was born in the new home country or had come to the country with his/her parents at a particular age. Children from

**The environment for  
Latvian language use  
abroad: the family and  
weekend schools**

**The significance of family  
habits and traditions with  
respect to weekend school  
attendance**

ethnically homogenous or mixed families, as parents have observed, have different language acquisition needs as well as different social behavior, ways of communicating, Latvian language proficiency levels, and reasons for choosing a language of communication. There were cases where for exactly these reasons, i.e., children with differing social and language histories in their families attended the same class in the same school, and as a result school attendance stopped. An illustrative excerpt from an interview: “When there were breaks, the children would switch to speaking Norwegian with each other. [...] Even though the teachers tried to limit this [by saying] that in school we only speak Latvian. But then at one moment all this changed, because an ever-larger group of children appeared who did not speak Norwegian. And they started a game and those who spoke Norwegian, they kind of didn’t feel like they were part of this game, because it happened too fast for them, and all this language – *paņem*, *aizej*, *atnes*<sup>5</sup>... Based on these languages they divided up the rooms. And [...] [my] daughter somehow didn’t want to go anymore and I wasn’t especially insistent that we were going to be going now. And with that we’re no longer going.”

Problems with ensuring  
accessible activities for  
children of different ages

Latvian school attendance, as evidenced by the in-depth interviews, is also affected by the scheduling of classes on weekends when families often want to rest from work and school, and not get up and go to another type of school. Another significant factor is the ability of the family to ensure a Latvian language environment for their children in other ways, e.g., regular trips to Latvia, communication with family and friends living in Latvia, family members from Latvia visiting or staying in the new home country.

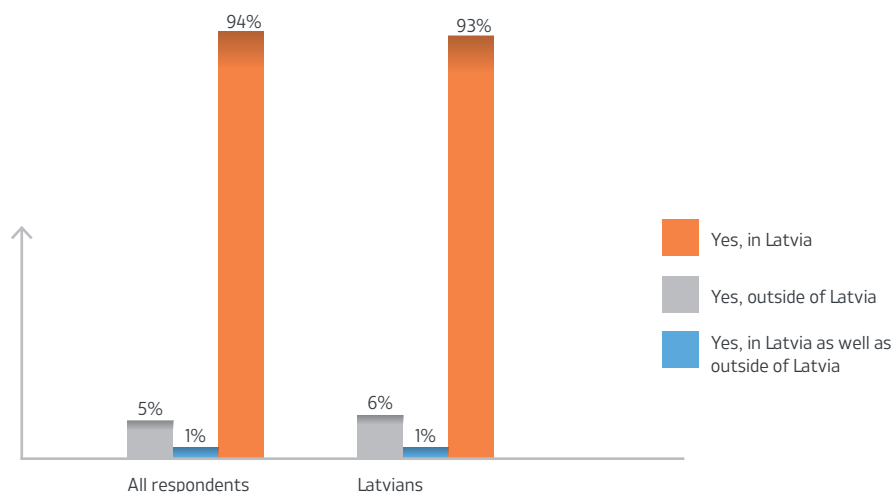
There are children who stopped attending Latvian weekend schools because of the methods used for language acquisition. Sharing her experience regarding class methods, one survey participant spoke of her daughter’s complaints about the way in which teachers’ methods in the Latvian schools differed from the teachers’ methods in the schools of their new home country. In the opinion of parents, there are differing pedagogical and methodological approaches, which create difficulties for their children and negatively impact their motivation to attend Latvian weekend school. This can be explained by the fact that most often the Latvian school teachers have no formal pedagogical education and the school activities occur at the initiative of some of the more motivated parents. In this context, the regular support by the LVA of the support activities for diaspora school teachers has special importance. Since 2005, the National Latvian Language Acquisition Agency (*Latviešu valodas apguves valsts aģentūra* – since 2009, *Latviešu valodas aģentūra* (LVA)) has cooperated with and supported Latvian language acquisition and language maintenance by diaspora Latvians by ensuring professional pedagogical assistance with both formal and informal training (LVA statistics).

<sup>5</sup> These words illustrate the system of verbal prefixes, which can be a challenge for non-native speakers of Latvian to learn to use properly. The meanings of these words are, approximately: *paņem* ‘take [this]’, *aizej* ‘go over there’, *atnes* ‘bring [it] over here’.

The experience of the interviewed emigrants and remigrants shows that weekend schools were primarily attended by children of preschool and nursery school age and – much less so – by children of primary school age. The already small number of children attending these schools also created problems when it came to dividing classes into groups by age in order to ensure that activities were age appropriate for the children participating. An issue to which an increased amount of attention will need to be devoted in the future is the implementation of support programs, similar in form and content to that of the weekend schools, for young people interested in maintaining their Latvian language proficiency.

In addition to Latvian weekend schools, diaspora children's and youth camps have a positive role in forming and strengthening Latvian identity. *The Plan for Measures Supporting Remigration 2013-2016* also envisages the organizing of these camps. Up until now NGOs and government institutions have actively involved themselves in the organizing of diaspora children's and youth camps. In 2013, the LVA organized a 6-day-long Latvian language learning camp called *Mana Latvija* (My Latvia) for diaspora children and their parents; it attracted 32 participants; in 2014, the LVA organized two *Mana Latvija* Latvian language learning camps for diaspora and remigrant children and young people, attracting a total of 60 participants. In addition, financial and methodological support was given to organizing 16 educational activities for the promotion of Latvian language acquisition and use in the diaspora; in total, 569 members of the diaspora participated in these activities (LVA statistics).

The Society Integration Foundation (*Sabiedrības integrācijas fonds* (SIF)) and the non-governmental sector have made an important contribution to the organizing of the camps for the diaspora community. In 2013, the Extracurricular Activities Program 2013 (*Ārpusskolas pasākumu programma 2013*), an SIF-administered government program for diaspora children and young people, was implemented, with total available funding amounting of 54,000 LVL (76,835 EUR). The program's specific goals envisioned (1) to maintain the connection between Latvia and the emigrant population of Latvia, (2) to strengthen their national identity, and (3) to promote their civic participation in the sociopolitical life of Latvia. The program supported extracurricular activities directed towards strengthening the link between diaspora children and Latvia as well as activities in which children from the diaspora and those living in Latvia participated in together. In total, 134 children and young people from the Latvian diaspora community in 16 countries participated in six project activities: excursions, educational activities directed towards particular interests, exploratory and creative activities, Latvian language activities and language use in everyday contact situations, community service work, concerts, and so on. In 2014, the government program Extracurricular Activities for Children. Summer Camps for Children from Latvia and the Diaspora in 2014 (*Ārpusskolas pasākumi bērniem. Vasaras nometnes Latvijas un diasporas bērniem 2014. gadā*) was implemented, during which, in the summer of 2014, 11 camps were organized by NGOs in different locations in Latvia with total available funding of 133,038 EUR (SIF 2014).



% of Latvian nationals who have underage children living together with them as emigrants abroad

Figure 80. The experience of attending camps for diaspora children and young people (Latvians and all emigrants, in percentages). Statistics: *Latvijas emigrantu kopienas 2015* (Latvia's emigrant communities 2015).

#### Camp attendance

The data from the survey of emigrants from Latvia (Figure 80) show that only a very small proportion of all emigrant children from Latvia attended the diaspora camps: only 8% of children of Latvian parents attended such camps (1% participated in diaspora camps in Latvia, 6% in camps outside of Latvia, 1% in camps both in and outside of Latvia).

The main reason why children did not participate in one of the children's or youth camps was a lack of information about the camps (42% of all surveyed parents and 43% of ethnic Latvian parents cited this reason). A lack of time (noted by 7% of all emigrants and 10% of ethnic Latvian emigrants), the child did not want to go or had no interest (15% and 8%, respectively), the expense of attending the camp (7% and 8%, respectively) were reasons mentioned, in addition to others. Another often mentioned reason was that the child was too young.

### 4.5. Future diaspora language support activities

The results of the most extensive survey up until now of emigrants from Latvia provide the basis for several important conclusions regarding the Latvian language situation in the diaspora in circumstances characterized by language competition. First of all, we can conclude that life as an emigrant impacts on proficiency in Latvian and other languages. Before leaving Latvia, Latvian emigrants had weaker proficiency in English and the other languages of their future home countries abroad, but living as emigrants, their proficiency in various

other languages gradually improved, while at the same time Latvian language proficiency decreased across all age groups. The level of Latvian language proficiency while living as an emigrant was significantly impacted by the length of time lived abroad – the longer an emigrant lived outside of Latvia, the weaker their Latvian language proficiency became. The opposite trend can be seen in the proficiency in the language (including English) of the emigrant's new home country – the longer an emigrant lived outside of Latvia, the stronger their proficiency in the language of their new home country became. Not only does language proficiency change, but the perception of the meaning of language also alters: independent of the time spent living as an emigrant, less than one tenth of all emigrants from Latvia continued to assess their Latvian language proficiency at a native level. In addition, the proportion of emigrants who considered that they spoke the language of their new home country at a native level significantly increased.

Secondly, changes can also be seen in language use in practice. As the home is an environment where one has a more or less free language choice, changes in language use were studied only in this environment. The results of the study show that after leaving Latvia, the proportion of emigrants from Latvia who usually spoke Latvian at home noticeably decreased, with less than half of all emigrants from Latvia and less than two thirds of ethnic Latvian emigrants speaking it in this environment. In circumstances characterized by language competition, which are defined by the language environment of the emigrant's new home country as well as the emigrant's social network, partner/spouse, and children, the language of the emigrant's new home country gained a more important meaning and a wider use. This is especially noticeable in so-called ethnically and linguistically mixed families where one partner/spouse is a speaker of the language of the emigrant's new home country. In families where both partners spoke Latvian, significant changes were not observed in the use of Latvian, although use of the language of the emigrant's new home country did increase in parallel, most often in contact with children who were assimilated considerably faster into their new language environment. Analyzing the effect of plans regarding the possibility of returning to Latvia in the future, the survey data confirm the assumption that Latvian was used more intensively at home by those emigrants who planned on returning to Latvia.

Thirdly, the study shows that it is important to support parents' efforts to maintain their children's Latvian identity and to develop their Latvian language proficiency. Although it was not important for less than one third of Latvian emigrants that their children knew Latvian, which can be explained by a wish to assimilate into the society of their new home country, the majority of parents considered their children's knowledge of Latvian to be important. Additionally, the wish for their children to grow up in a Latvian language environment, and to speak their native language, was one of the reasons for a number of emigrants deciding to return to Latvia.

**Actions to maintain  
Latvian language  
proficiency and Latvian  
identity in the diaspora**

Also, although the number of Latvian weekend schools has significantly increased around the world in the last five years (currently there are approximately 100 such schools), these were attended by less than one tenth of all emigrant families from Latvia and 12% of Latvian emigrant families with children. The main reason for non-attendance of weekend schools was a lack of information regarding such schools, the children's young age, and the distance of the school from the family's home. The children's lack of motivation or interest in attending such schools was a reason mentioned less often. The proportion of emigrants whose children participated in one of the diaspora children's and youth camps was even smaller (6%).

The results of the analysis of the diaspora Latvian language situation are the basis not only for evaluating the present diaspora and Latvian language policy, but also for planning future policy. Latvian language proficiency is decreasing across all age groups, therefore, support is equally necessary for children as well as adults. Taking into account the statistics showing the small number of children attending Latvian schools, special attention must be given to ensuring the delivery of information regarding the possibilities for maintaining and improving language proficiency. This means that it is very important to ensure multifaceted support for Latvian language acquisition and the strengthening of existing language knowledge for those living outside of Latvia as well as those returning to Latvia, with special attention given to school-aged children. Currently, the content of support activities for the diaspora and remigrants, which are specified in policy planning documents, can be considered to correspond to the needs of this target group; however, the funding for these and, therefore, also the intensity with which they can be implemented, as well as the size of the target group, continues to be insufficient. This applies to the work of the Latvian weekend schools as well as to the organizing of diaspora children's and youth camps and also to ensuring supplementary Latvian language activities for children who begin or return to studies in schools in Latvia after having lived outside of Latvia.

#### **4.6. Support for diaspora Latvian language acquisition**

**Latvian weekend schools**

The Latvian Language Agency gives support for study at diaspora schools and also the purchase of methodological resources, the professional development of diaspora educators, the ensuring of the operation of weekend schools, the organization of educational activities, and so on. Currently, Latvian can be learned in 25 countries outside of Latvia, at approximately 103 informal educational institutions, which are called weekend schools. In North America, Australia, and Canada, the operation of Latvian schools is stable and study programs have been developed based on decades of experience and carefully cultivated traditions. In Europe, the situation is changing rapidly and the number of Latvian schools is continuously increasing. The largest number of weekend schools in Europe are located in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Germany.

|                   | USA | South America | Australia | Europe | Canada | Russian Federation |
|-------------------|-----|---------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| Number of schools | 24  | 1             | 7         | 66     | 5      | 3                  |

Table 18. Latvian diaspora weekend schools. Statistics: LVA

Until 2005, support for diaspora Latvian language acquisition in the East was the responsibility of the World Federation of Free Latvians (Pasaules Brīvo latviešu apvienība). Following this, these support functions were delegated by the IZM (Ministry of Education and Science) to the LVA. In Russia, Latvian weekend schools operate within the space of the Latvian Embassy in Moscow and the Latvian Consulate in St. Petersburg; Latvian language courses are held by the Latvian Cultural Society (Latviešu kultūras biedrība) in Moscow and Latvian can also be learned within the Latvian communities in Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Bashkortostan.

#### Support for teachers



Figure 81. Advanced training courses for diaspora weekend school teachers organized in 2015 in Strazde. Photo: LVA

Direct co-financing of the weekend schools, which would allow the schools to plan their future work more securely in the long term and direct the contributions by parents to other urgent needs, was first available in 2013. In 2015, 42 weekend schools (28 schools in Europe, 9 in the USA, 3 in Australia, 2 in Canada) were selected as part of a competition and received financial support to pay for renting space, teachers' travel expenses, and so on. The financial support continued in 2016 at the same level as until now. Financial support for Latvian schools in Europe is administered by the ELA, but financial support for schools in the USA, Australia, and Canada is organized by the PBLA.

Between 2010 and 2015, diaspora teachers were given multifaceted financial support: ensuring the opportunity for further professional development through 7 advanced training courses in Latvia and abroad (334 diaspora educators participated) and 10 seminars abroad for the sharing of experience (184 diaspora educators participated). Financial support was provided for two diaspora educators' seminars organized by the PBLA in Latvia (87 educators participated).

The Mana Latvija children's and young people's Latvian language acquisition camp, organized by the Latvian Language Agency, takes place every year. For example, 29 children aged 9-16 participated in the camp in 2015. They came from Australia, Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the USA.

Support for children and  
young people



Figure 82. The Mana Latvija diaspora children's and young people's Latvian language acquisition camp.  
Photo: LVA

Electronic learning materials and methodological materials intended for the diaspora have been developed and are available on the LVA website *Teach and learn Latvian! (Māci un mācies latviešu valodu!)* (<http://maciunmacies.valoda.lv>). These include include: 6 diaspora Latvian weekend school study programs; 2 learning and methodological material supplements for diaspora programs; 12 video supplements for diaspora programs; 12 synopses of learning exercises for diaspora programs; 16 animated films developed by children; 17 video lessons for understanding grammatical questions; 7 video lectures for diaspora weekend school teachers; 4 video consultations for diaspora teachers and parents. Work on this website is ongoing; in 2015, 9 video lectures intended for diaspora weekend school teachers were added.

Likewise, in cooperation with the Latvian Foreign Ministry, approximately 100 diaspora weekend schools are regularly sent learning and methodological materials; methodological consultations intended for diaspora teachers and parents are also provided.

Support for Latvian language acquisition and the further development of proficiency by members of the diaspora is also planned in the future, within the limits of the financial resources provided to the LVA, as detailed in the aforementioned strategy documents. In order to improve the results of the work done by the LVA, in the last few years a survey form has been developed for diaspora Latvian schools in order to determine the specific needs of schools as well as to ensure feedback and an exchange of information, which is often one of the most significant factors in the success of completed projects.

**The design of learning materials and methodological resources**

**Support for ensuring the availability of learning materials**





# **LATVIAN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AT UNIVERSITIES ABROAD**

(Indra Lapinska)

Goals in supporting  
universities

There is a desire to learn Latvian, for research purposes as well as for personal and other reasons, not only in Latvia but also abroad. Latvian is one of the official languages of the European Union. This has furthered the use of Latvian in the domains relating to modern technology and translation, which has also influenced the expansion of Latvian language acquisition. Latvian language acquisition abroad has a somewhat longstanding tradition, which is based foremost in scientific interest; Latvian, as one of the Baltic languages, has been the focus of research in Baltic language study centers at many universities (*Latviešu valodas kā svešvalodas apguve Eiropas augstskolās 2008*, 8). Currently, along with the increase in support provided by Latvia, there has been an increase in the number of students wishing to learn Latvian more for personal reasons – culture, interest, tradition, and so on. Latvian language acquisition takes place within the framework of universities themselves as well as with the support of the Latvian state. This function is realized by the LVA, as one of its duties is ensuring Latvian language acquisition at universities around the world.

The LVA's goals for supporting universities are:

- strengthening the work of Baltic Studies programs and lectureships outside of Latvia, thus gaining new specialists in Latvian language and culture and the wider Baltic region;
- encouraging studies about the Latvian language, which complement contributions from scientists in Latvia and provide a view from a different perspective;
- encouraging interest among foreign students in Latvian cultural history and culture;
- achieving adherence to the parity principle (student exchange).

**Countries and the number of universities abroad**

Latvian is studied at  
at least 21 universities  
around the world

As of now, the LVA has cooperated with 27 universities abroad. Primarily, these are universities located in Europe; outside of Europe, these are educational institutions in the USA and China. Cooperation has developed as a result of the work of universities and their faculties as well as due to the initiative of the LVA. The work of the LVA is in large measure organized according to the information resulting from the study conducted in 2007-2008 entitled *Study of Latvian as a foreign language in the countries of Europe* (*Latviešu valodas kā svešvalodas apguve Eiropas valstīs*) and also on information received directly from universities with regard to their study processes and needs. During the period at the focus of this study, an interactive map was developed (<http://maciunmacies.valoda.lv/vva/>), which contains information on the locations where Latvian language and culture learning opportunities have existed in the past or are currently being offered. It should be noted that the situation has markedly changed since 2008, when the study was conducted. Structural changes have occurred at a number of universities and, as a result, work in the area of Latvian language study and research has ended, for example, at the University of Vienna in Austria and at

Masaryk University in Brno in the Czech Republic. This has significantly impacted the cooperation of these universities with the LVA.

Currently, according to LVA statistics, 21 universities in 12 countries are involved with the study or research of the Latvian language: in China (2), the Czech Republic (2), Estonia (2), Finland (1), France (1), Germany (3), Lithuania (3), Poland (2), Russia (2), Sweden (1), Ukraine (1), and the USA (1).

The LVA provides methodological, organizational, informational, and financial support to universities abroad. This support primarily encompasses the strengthening of the work of the Latvian faculty at foreign universities.

### **Criteria for providing support**

The criteria for providing financial support for Latvian language acquisition at universities outside of Latvia are the following:

- 1) support is defined according international agreements, memoranda, or other international documents;
- 2) support is specified according to a government declaration or order from the Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija – IZM);
- 3) support has already been granted in accordance with an interinstitutional agreement;
- 4) the university secures co-financing;
- 5) available financial and material guarantees and the degree to which support is necessary;
- 6) universities where Latvian language acquisition is a full-time program or part of a Baltic Studies program and research is taking place into Latvian language, literature, or other domains relating to Latvia;
- 7) number of students;
- 8) the degree to which the availability of lecturers is guaranteed;
- 9) earlier positive cooperation, the stability of the university and its faculty, and so on.

Since 2009, long-term support has developed and support has been given to, for example, the Universities of Tartu and Tallinn in Estonia. Following the implementation of the requirements of an international agreement or memorandum, Latvian language acquisition is now supported, for example, at the University of Washington, in Seattle, USA. Following an IZM order, regular support is given, for example, to Charles University in Prague in the Czech Republic. Between 2010 and 2015, 5-8 lectureships have been supported (Table 19).

| No. | Country        | University                                                                                                                                              | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|-----|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1.  | USA            | University of Washington<br>(Department of Scandinavian Studies)                                                                                        | x    | x    | x    | x    | x    | x    |
| 2.  | Austria        | University of Vienna<br>(Department of Scandinavian Studies)                                                                                            | x    | x    | x    |      |      |      |
| 3.  | Czech Republic | Masaryk University in Brno<br>(Department of Linguistics and<br>Baltic Languages)                                                                       |      | x    | x    | x    |      |      |
| 4.  | Czech Republic | Charles University in Prague<br>(Baltic Studies Seminar of the<br>Department of East European Studies<br>of the Faculty of Philosophy)                  | x    | x    | x    | x    | x    | x    |
| 5.  | Estonia        | University of Tallinn<br>(Language Center)                                                                                                              | x    | x    | x    | x    | x    | x    |
| 6.  | Estonia        | University of Tartu<br>(Language Center )                                                                                                               | x    | x    | x    | x    | x    | x    |
| 7.  | China          | Beijing Foreign Studies University                                                                                                                      |      |      | x    | x    | x    | x    |
| 8.  | Lithuania      | Vytautas Magnus University<br>(Kaunas)                                                                                                                  |      |      |      |      |      | x    |
| 9.  | Ukraine        | Ivan Franko National University<br>of Lviv (Baltic Studies Center at the<br>Department of Foreign Languages<br>in the Faculty of International Affairs) |      |      | x    | x    | x    | x    |

Table 19. Overview of the lectureships supported by the LVA at universities outside of Latvia, 2010–2015. Statistics: LVA

**Latvian language in China**

In 2012, a Latvian language course was introduced at Beijing Foreign Studies University and, thanks to the active work of Latvian language lecturers, Latvian has become a popular study subject among students at this Chinese university (Latvian language is an elective course). In 2012, the Baltic Studies Center at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv began operation. And in 2015, in order to promote Latvian language acquisition in Latvia's linguistically-related neighboring country of Lithuania, the LVA signed an agreement with Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas.

### The number of Latvian learners

In the period between 2010 and 2015, at universities supported by the LVA, Latvian has been studied by an average of 135 students within one academic year (for precise numbers per year see Table 20).

Since 2010, the LVA has conducted an informal survey concerning the number of Latvian language learners at other universities as well. However, in order to get reliable statistics regarding the number of Latvian language learners at universities outside of Latvia, it would be necessary to conduct a broader study with a clearly designed methodology and criteria for obtaining these data. According to data from the informal survey, the average number of language learners fluctuates between 330 and 350 per academic year (including students at universities supported by the LVA).

| No.           | Country        | University                                                                                                                       | Number of language learners |            |            |            |            |
|---------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Academic year |                |                                                                                                                                  | 2010 / 2011                 | 2011 /2012 | 2012 /2013 | 2013 /2014 | 2014 /2015 |
| 1.            | USA            | University of Washington<br>(Department of Scandinavian Studies)                                                                 | 8                           | 8          | 14         | 8          |            |
| 2.            | Austria        | University of Vienna<br>(Department of Scandinavian Studies)                                                                     | 10                          | 7          | -          | -          | -          |
| 3.            | Czech Republic | Masaryk University in Brno (Department of Linguistics and Baltic Languages)                                                      | 15                          | 24         | 22         | 21         | -          |
| 4.            | Czech Republic | Charles University in Prague<br>(Baltic Studies Seminar of the Department of East European Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy) | 16                          | 14         | 12         | 15         | 19         |
| 5.            | Estonia        | University of Tallinn<br>(Language Center)                                                                                       | 33                          | 33         | 19         | 16         | 10         |
| 6.            | Estonia        | University of Tartu<br>(Language Center)                                                                                         | 41                          | 49         | 54         | 52         | 54         |
| 7.            | China          | Beijing Foreign Studies University                                                                                               | -                           | -          | 8          | 17         | 24         |
| 8.            | Lithuania      | Vytautas Magnus University<br>(Kaunas)                                                                                           | -                           | -          | 30         | 15         | 13         |

Table 20. Overview of the number of Latvian language learners at universities outside of Latvia, 2010-2015. Statistics: LVA

Scientific interest,  
a personal connection, and  
also curiosity

### The motivation for learning Latvian

The reasons for student interest and motivation for studying Latvian are very diverse. Latvian is studied for reasons connected with one's studies and also for research purposes (for example, in order to take the required Latvian language course as part of the requirements of a Baltic studies program or in order to expand one's knowledge base while studying Indo-European studies, history, or political science). Those who wish to learn Latvian for professional reasons are those wishing to work as translators or with businesses associated with Latvia, while those studying Latvian for personal reasons do it to travel, to communicate with family or friends, to study a new language that is not so widespread, and so on.



Figure 83. Students at the Beijing Foreign Studies University, participants in the project *Found in translation. Rainis and Aspazija* (*Atrasts tulkojumā. Rainis un Aspazija*). Photo: M. Nikolajeva

Activities have been organized to increase student interest about Latvia. Thus, for example, in 2015 the UNESCO Latvian National Commission and the LVA implemented a creative project related to the works of Latvian poets Aspazija and Rainis entitled *Found in translation. Rainis and Aspazija (Atrasts tulkojumā. Rainis un Aspazija)*. Universities outside of Latvia where courses in Latvian language and culture are offered were invited to apply. This project gained the attention of universities in nine different countries and a total of 57 students from these universities became involved with the project (Table 21).

Activities for encouraging Latvian language acquisition

| University                                            | Number of project participants |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| University of Washington (Seattle, USA)               | 5                              |
| Charles University (Prague, Czech Rep.)               | 10                             |
| University of Tartu (Estonia)                         | 11                             |
| Saint Petersburg State University (Russia)            | 3                              |
| Beijing Foreign Studies University (China)            | 10                             |
| Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania)        | 5                              |
| Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland)         | 3                              |
| Ivan Franko National University in Lviv (Ukraine)     | 6                              |
| Ernst Moritz Arndt University of Greifswald (Germany) | 4                              |

Table 21. Overview of the number of participants in the project *Found in Translation. Rainis and Aspazija (Atrasts tulkojumā. Rainis un Aspazija)*. Statistics: LVA

One factor motivating foreign students is the opportunity to further develop their Latvian language proficiency at summer schools in Latvia. Summer schools are organized every summer by several universities in Latvia. For example, Vidzeme University (Vidzemes Augstskola) regularly organizes the Baltic International Summer School (Baltijas Starptautiskā vasaras skola) and a similar summer school is organized by Daugavpils University (Daugavpils Universitāte). However, up until now, Latvian language acquisition has not been the main aim of these summer schools. In 2015, the Pre-Studies Training Center (Pirmsstudiju mācību centrs) and Language Center (Valodu centrs) at the University of Latvia organized a Latvian language and culture summer school for foreign students for the first time. The Latvian Language Agency also provided assistance to the organizers. Six students from France, Germany, Finland, Estonia, and China participated in the summer school.

Summer school in Latvia – a significant source of motivation

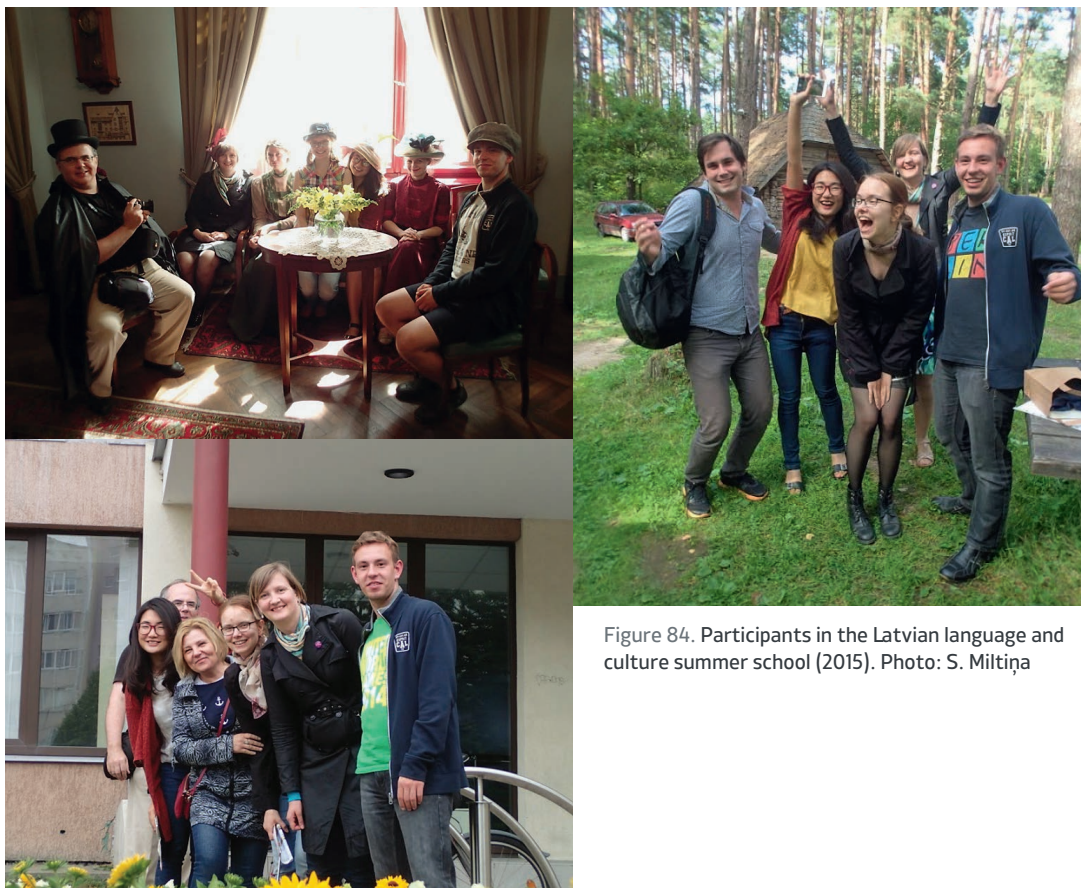


Figure 84. Participants in the Latvian language and culture summer school (2015). Photo: S. Miltiņa

#### Sharing experience and informational seminars

##### Support for lecturers

As a result of the study *Latvian as a foreign language in the countries of Europe (Latviešu valodas kā svešvalodas apguve Eiropas valstīs)* (2008) as well as from direct communication with Latvian language instructors at universities outside of Latvia, it has been determined that there is a need for a regular exchange of experience and the development of knowledge regarding Latvia and current events in Latvia. This is due to the fact that working outside of Latvia, as a result of increased distance, means that a direct connection with Latvia grows weaker and it becomes more difficult to follow recent developments with respect to professional development as well as events in Latvia itself. Lecturers encounter similar problems in the everyday course of their work.

Prior to the period that this study focuses on, three Latvian studies seminars were organized in Latvia – in 2000, 2005, and 2007. The main organizer of the seminars was the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory within the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science (Matemātikas un informātikas institūta Mākslīgā intelekta laboratorija) at the University of Latvia, but funding came from various sources, including foreign institutions (the first seminar was supported by Stockholm University and others) as well as the State Language Agency (the Latvian Language Agency was, from 2009 onwards, one of the funders of the third seminar).

The LVA has endeavored to revive the tradition of organizing such seminars by organizing seminars in 2014 and 2015 for lecturers from universities outside of Latvia. These seminars lasted two days and focused on giving participants a chance to share and exchange their experience. The main themes of these seminars were studying Latvian as a foreign language (current development, the newest learning materials, resources for study), the latest Latvian literature, and the sharing and exchange of experience among lecturers.



Figure 85. Participants in the 2014 Latvian Studies seminar. Photo: A. Šalme

### **Methodological support**

During the previous period of study, one of the problems that was identified was the lack of modern learning materials and methodological resources. In order to improve this situation, the Latvian Language Agency has published several new learning materials and methodological resources for language acquisition, including dictionaries (Table 22).

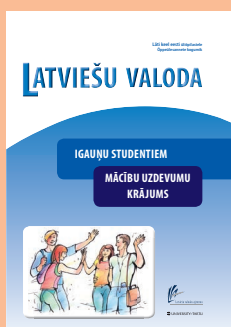
## Learning materials and methodological resources



Nāna N., Klēvere-Velhli I.  
*Latviešu valoda studentiem.*  
*Mācību līdzeklis.*  
[Latvian language for students. A Resource for Study.]  
Rīga: LVA, 2012



Nāna N.  
*Latviešu valoda studentiem.*  
*Skolotāja grāmata. Metodisks līdzeklis.*  
[Latvian language for students.  
Teachers' Edition. A Methodological Resource.]  
Rīga: LVA, 2014



Zagorska I.  
*Latviešu valoda igauņu studentiem.*  
*Mācību uzdevumu krājums.*  
[Latvian language for Estonian students.  
A Collection of Exercises.]  
Rīga: LVA, 2014



Auziņa I., Nešpore G.  
*Latviešu valodas darbības vārdu tabulas.*  
*Metodisks līdzeklis.*  
[Latvian verb tables. A Methodological resource.]  
Rīga: LVA, 2014

| Dictionaries                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   | <p><i>Česko-latyšsko-litevská konverzace</i>=<i>Čehu-latviešu-lietuviešu sarunvārdnīca</i>=<i>Čekų-latvių-lietuvių kalbų vadovas</i>.<br/>[Czech-Latvian-Lithuanian Phrasebook]<br/>Expanded, corrected edition D. Šeleliova,<br/>Ed. Čehu-latviešu klubs.<br/>[The Czech-Latvian Club] Riga: LVA, 2013</p>                                                                              |
|  | <p><i>Igauņu-latviešu vārdnīca</i> = <i>Eesti-lāti sõnaraamat</i>.<br/>[Estonian-Latvian Dictionary]<br/>Ed. V. Ernštreits. Latviešu valodas aģentūra<br/>[Latvian Language Agency].<br/>Riga, Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2015<br/>The expanded and continuously updated version<br/>of the dictionary is available online at: <a href="http://www.ee-lv.lv">www.ee-lv.lv</a>.</p> |

Table 22. Learning materials and methodological resources for studying Latvian as a foreign language published by the LVA.

Between 2010 and 2015, the LVA has continued to provide support for work by academic and scientific institutions around the world by regularly sending the newest books, DVDs and other useful materials published by the LVA and other organizations to help Latvian language acquisition and learning about Latvian literature and cultural history.

### Support for activities raising awareness about Latvian

Latvia is being promoted at universities abroad with the intent of helping to create an image of Latvia and Latvian culture for students. In addition, young people are given an opportunity not only to study Latvian, but are also provided with more extensive information about Latvia as well as the opportunity to establish personal contacts with Latvians.

This is the reason for providing support not only to lecturers and specifically for the implementation of study programs, but also for various cultural and other activities. Support for activities is organized utilizing two approaches:

- 1) The LVA ensures support for activities in response to demand;
- 2) The LVA itself is the initiator or the activity.

Cultural and informational activities

**The student conference  
Tilti Baltijā (Bridges  
across the Baltic)**

Due to demand from universities a number of cultural activities have been supported in neighboring countries: in Lithuania and Estonia, for example, at Šiauliai University, Klaipėda University, Vilnius University, the University of Tartu and Vytautas Magnus University. Outside of the Baltic States, several series of guest lectures have been supported at the University of Helsinki, Charles University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno. The Baltic Student Conference *Tilti Baltijā (Bridges across the Baltic)* has already become an established tradition, the beginnings of which can be found in 2012 when the first Baltic Students' Day was organized at the University of Tartu. The originator of the Baltic Student Conference was the University of Tartu, but the Latvian Language Agency has become one of the main regular supporters of the conference. The first conference took place in 2013 at the University of Tartu, the second conference took place in 2014 at the University of Latvia, and the third conference took place in 2015 at Vilnius University.

In 2011, the LVA organized a conference *Latvian Language in the World (Latviešu valoda pasaulē)* on the European Day of Language. The speakers were lecturers from universities outside of Latvia. Presentations on the possibilities for studying Latvian were given by: Pavel Stoll of the Charles University in Prague – *Latviešu valoda Čehijā (The Latvian language in the Czech Republic)*; Ilze Zagorska of the University of Tartu – *Latviešu valoda un kultūra Tartu Universitātē (Latvian language and culture at the University of Tartu)*; Eglė Žilinskaitė-Šinkūnienė of Vilnius University – *Letonika Lietuvā: iespējas, problēmas, risinājumi (Latvian Studies in Lithuania: possibilities, problems, solutions)*. US student and Fulbright scholar Jordan Cook talked about his experience studying Latvian.



Figure 86. The Student Conference *Tilti Baltijā (Bridges across the Baltic)* in Rīga in 2014 (left) and in Vilnius in 2015 (right). Photo: Ilze Zagorska

### **Trends and problems in ensuring Latvian language acquisition at universities outside of Latvia**

Latvian language and culture are the most important components of Latvian national identity. Learn about Latvian language and culture is the most direct way for foreigners to understand the Latvian people and Latvia. It is in Latvia's national interest that the number of Latvian speakers and those familiar with Latvia increases and also that the Latvian language establish itself in the international academic environment.

In reaching these goals several important points must be resolved:

- 1) The necessity of designing a targeted government support program;

Unlike in Latvia, in a number of countries, government programs have been developed for the targeted support of language acquisition and studies (e.g., in Germany, Finland, Estonia).

The Estonian example is presented for comparison. Following the reestablishment of the Estonian state in 1991, study of Estonian language and culture at universities abroad was only supported with two-way agreements between universities (the Estonian government did not support Estonian language study abroad). However, in 1990 it was recognized that without government support it was not possible to continue quality study of Estonian language and culture outside of Estonia and that the establishment of new study centers was also complicated by this. Therefore, in 2001, the Council of the Academic Studies of Estonian Language and Culture Abroad (part of the Estonian Education and Science Ministry) began work that developed the Program for the Academic Study of Estonian Language and Culture Abroad (Eesti Keele ja Kultuuri Akadeemilise Välisõppe Programme), which also currently coordinates Estonian language and culture study outside of Estonia.

- 2) The impact of competition and the financial situation;

In recent years, an austerity regime has been instituted at a number of European universities for economic reasons. This has resulted in certain changes. Several universities, which previously offered a Latvian language course, for example, Berzsenyi Dániel College of Szombathely in Hungary (since 2008, the University of West Hungary), the University of Münster (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster) and the University of Cologne in Germany, and the University of Bergen in Norway, no longer offer any Latvian language learning opportunities.

In 2015, the question of the future existence of the Baltic Studies program at the University of Greifswald (Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität Greifswald) was raised. In Germany, it is possible to study the

**The need for  
a government program**

**Changes at universities  
due to financial austerity**

Baltic languages as a separate course of study only at this university, where the Baltic Studies Institute has been in operation since its establishment in 1993 (until 2012, this opportunity also existed at the University of Münster). Therefore, as of 2012, the University of Greifswald is the last university in Germany where it is possible to study Latvian and Lithuanian language and culture at an academic level. In 2015, the university adopted a decision to decrease the number of teaching positions.

The only exception to the current situation is China, where interest in Latvian is noticeably increasing. In addition to The Beijing Foreign Studies University, since 2015 it has also been possible to study Latvian at the Beijing Foreign Studies University. Interest in developing a Latvian language course has also been expressed by Hebei Institute of Foreign Languages.

3) Limited co-financing possibilities for lectureships;

In many cases, the existence of a Latvian language program as part of a university's range of courses is influenced by the ability of Latvia to secure co-financing to support the lectureship. For instance, the University of Helsinki, the University of Münster, the University of Warsaw, and Tbilisi State University have requested co-financing. However, due to a lack of financial resources, it has not been possible to support all requests.

4) The difficulty in hiring qualified lecturers;

Whether or not Latvian language courses are offered is also affected by the ability of the university to hire a Latvian language lecturer. In the majority of cases, universities select lecturers themselves, but it is not always the case that specialists with requisite qualifications are available in a given country.

Latvian language acquisition and popularity is greatly influenced by the individuals who are involved with organizing and implementing the Latvian language study program. Lecturers must be more than high-quality Latvian language specialists and teachers; their role is also to be a cultural ambassador for Latvia. Often a deciding factor ends up being a particular individual's level of activity and enthusiasm. This, in turn, creates the risk that in the case of personnel changes, Latvian language efforts can weaken.

5) The lack of informational and study materials;

In this case, it is not the lack of financial resources for acquiring learning materials that poses a problem, but the actual lack of materials. Very little material is available about Latvia, its geography, econ-

Interest in opportunities  
for studying Latvian are  
increasing around the  
world

The lack of informational  
and study materials

omy, history, politics, and society (in English or as bilingual material). There is insufficient information about Latvian in English and a lack of attractive commercial and informational materials about Latvian. There is a lack of informational material that lecturers could use at university open days and other events to popularize Latvian.

The majority of universities offer interdisciplinary regional (Eastern Europe and the Baltic region) courses to students from various fields, and these courses contain content modules on Latvia. The development of learning materials for these modules would significantly simplify the work of instructors on these courses.

A great help to Latvian language instructors would also be learning materials for Latvian language study at B1-C1 level.

- 6) The lack of opportunities for further developing Latvian proficiency in Latvia.

The LVA's observations indicate that student motivation is noticeably increased by the possibility of participating in summer language courses in Latvia. Additionally, a fundamental pragmatic factor that influences student interest in Latvian language courses is the possibility of getting academic credits as well as internationally-recognized language proficiency certificates. For these reasons, it is very important to involve universities in organizing these courses.

### **Tasks for further developing opportunities for Latvian language study**

To be able to fully implement this aspect of language policy, the following questions need to be resolved:

- 1) a government program must be designed for targeted support of language acquisition and studies at universities abroad with clearly defined criteria for receiving support and details concerning the extent of available support;
- 2) the design of learning materials for courses about Latvia and for Latvian language acquisition at B1-C1 level must be organized and financially supported;
- 3) support must be secured for the work of Latvian language summer schools;
- 4) the design of informational materials about Latvia, including Latvian language and culture, must be supported.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2015, the College of Foreign Languages and Cultures.





# **THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LATGALIAN WRITTEN LANGUAGE**

(Solvita Pošeiko)

In 2017, the centennial of the First Latgalian Congress will be celebrated in Latvia. The Congress was the democratically elected representative body of the Latvians of Latgale<sup>1</sup>, which decided to join this cultural, historical region of Latvia with Latvia's other regions to form a single country. This celebration highlights the preconditions to the establishment of a unified Latvia and also current problems in various areas, including issues related to language management. This chapter discusses sociolinguistic processes, which are related to the use of the written and spoken forms of Latgalian<sup>2</sup> and are in large part applicable to Latgale as a geographic region as well as to a virtual environment which has no fixed territorial boundaries. On one hand, the use of spoken Latgalian and also its written form is obvious to residents of the region, but on the other hand, this is unappreciated and insignificant at the government level, and future prospects are also endangered despite the fact that linguistic identity is strong and that Latgalian is used increasingly often in communication, including in other parts of Latvia (for example, see the opinion of the residents of the town of Baltnava on the use and future prospects of the written and spoken forms of Latgalian: Lazdiņa 2014, 51–74). At the root of these concerns are various subjective and objective reasons, the most significant of which touch on the insufficiency of human and financial resources for securing the development of this language variety, and the absence of a system of targeted support, especially in education.

This chapter provides an overview of the use of the Latgalian written language in various sociolinguistically meaningful domains: science, education and culture, mass media, public announcements in cities, tourism, while highlighting the most important events, the most active participants (researchers, individuals active in society and culture) and various publications. This informational summary of the events of the last five years gives a clear image of the current state of development of Latgalian Studies: positive trends as well as negative aspects, which can be evaluated with respect to the needs for further developing language policy and an action plan to continue developing this language variety and its use (for more on Latgalian Studies as a branch of science and for recent developments in this field see Šuplinska, Leikuma 2012, 205–212).

<sup>1</sup> Latgale is the easternmost of Latvia's four traditional cultural, historical regions. The others are Kurzeme (also called Courland in English), Vidzeme, and Zemgale (occasionally also called Semigallia in English).

<sup>2</sup> Latgalian is the term for one of the three dialect groups of Latvian. Spoken in the eastern part of Latvia, Latgalian has a written tradition and orthography separate from the rest of Latvian.

## 6.1. Latgalian studies: scientific projects, conferences, and publications

The issues relevant to Latgalian Studies are being addressed at a number of institutes of higher education within Latvia (e.g., the University of Latvia, Daugavpils University), non-governmental organizations and associations (e.g., the Latgalian Cultural Society (Latgaliešu kultūras biedrība – LKB), the Latgale Student Center (Latgales Studentu centrs – LgSC), and Latgolys Saeima (The Parliament of Latgale)); however, indicators in recent decades show that the Research Institute of Regional Studies (Reģionālistikas zinātniskais institūts – REGI) at the Rēzekne Higher Education Institution (Rēzeknes Tehnoloģiju akadēmija – RTA, until 2016, Rēzeknes Augstskola (Rēzekne College – RA)<sup>3</sup>) is the most important center for Latgalian Studies in Latvia.

As early as in 1997, RA became involved with the government research program Letonica (coordinated by I. Šuplinska,), which allowed for the creation of a base of research studies focused on the area of Latgalian Studies. Thanks to government funding (IZM 2013–2016 and KM 2015–2017<sup>4</sup>) the International Latgalian Studies Conference has become an established scientific tradition, which takes place every year in a different location (St. Petersburg, Russia in 2008; Rēzekne, Latvia in 2009; Greifswald, Germany in 2010; Poznań, Poland in 2011; Rīga,

The International  
Latgalian Studies  
Conference



Figure 87. The Third World Gathering of Latgalians (Trešais Pasaules latgaliešu saiets) in Rēzekne in 2012. Photo: Māris Justs.

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter, the abbreviations used in this article will refer to the educational institution as it was called at a particular point in time. In other words, when referring to the time period up until 2016, RA is used, and for the time period from January 2016 onwards, RTA is used.

<sup>4</sup> IZM = Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija (Ministry of Education and Science), KM = Kultūras ministrija (Ministry of Culture).

Latvia in 2012; Krasnoyarsk Region, Russia in 2013; Rēzekne, Latvia in 2014; Vilnius, Lithuania in 2015) and at which questions relating to Latgalian Studies are examined from the perspective of related scientific disciplines: linguistics, literary theory, folklore, history, and cultural studies. Every conference “highlights some important event in the cultural life of Latgale, persons significant with respect to cultural history are discussed along with their contributions, attention is directed towards efforts which have significance for the future by placing and viewing the issues [at the focus of] Latgalian Studies in a wider context” (Lazdiņa, Leikuma, Nau 2014, 1). Scientific articles in various languages (most often Latvian, the Latgalian written language, English) based on the lectures given at the conference are published in the collection *Latgalistikys kongresa materiali* (*Materials of the Latgalian Studies Congress*) and the humanities journal *Via Latgalica*, both of which are available in print and electronically (Table 23).

Issues  
requiring attention for  
the further development  
of Latgale

In 2012, the Third World Gathering of Latgalians, a significant week-long series of scientific and cultural events was organized by the Rēzekne Latgalian Cultural Society (Rēzeknes Latgaliešu kultūras biedrība; since 2016, the Latgalian Cultural Society (Latgaliešu Kultūras biedrība)) during which the conference *Latvia's Independence Period: Latgale's Opportunity or Destruction?* (*Latvijas neatkarības laiks – Latgales iespēja vai iznīcība?*) took place. The meeting closed with the signing of a joint resolution addressed to the Saeima (Latvian parliament) and government. Issues recognized as needing to be resolved urgently in order to ensure the development of the region were identified as: supporting the development of the Latgalian written language and achieving the adoption of changes to the education system by introducing regional studies as a subject; including the Latgalian written language and Latgalian cultural historical competition in the list of country-wide competitions; the development of learning materials for the successful mastery of the Latgalian written language, literature, and cultural studies at school and university; the expansion of the amount of mass media broadcast in Latgalian; renewing the Latgalian Written Language Subcommittee of the Latvian Language Expert Commission at the State Language Center (Latviešu valodas ekspertu komisijas Latgaliešu rakstu valodas apakškomisija; Valsts valodas centrs); and organizing the names used in the public sphere for populated places and natural sites in Latgale. Financial and moral support is necessary from the government if these issues are to be resolved and an education program developed, training provided for teachers, and so on.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, researchers at REGI have directed and been actively involved in the implementation of several international projects as a result of which a number of sociolinguistic and cultural linguistic studies have been carried out (e.g., the 2009 monograph *Valodas Austrumlatvijā: pētījuma dati un rezultāti* (*The Languages of Eastern Latvia: Data and Results*), which combined survey data from 9076 respondents (I. Šuplinska, S. Lazdiņa were the scientific chairwomen)). During this same period, researchers began to present their work at international conferences and started to publish articles

in English, provoking scientific discussion regarding the meaning of language in the historical development of the Latgale region and its role and position in present-day Latvia and Latgale (e.g., Lazdiņa, Iannaccaro, Šuplinska, Dell'Aquila 2011, Šuplinska, Lazdiņa 2011, Marten 2012, Marten, Lazdiņa, Pošeiko, Murinska 2012, Lazdiņa, Marten 2012, Lazdiņa 2013).

In the last five years, four international scientific research projects focusing on the humanities have been undertaken; their results have made a significant contribution to the advancement of Latgalian Studies.

- 1) Between 2009 and 2012, the ESF project *The Cultural Linguistic and Socioeconomic Aspects of Territorial Identity in the Development of the Latgale Region* (*Teritoriālās identitātes lingvokulturoloģiskie un sociālekonomiskie aspekti Latgales reģiona attīstībā*) (scientific chairwomen: S. Lazdiņa, I. Šuplinska) was carried out. During this period, 23 researchers, under the supervision of I. Šuplinska, drafted 300 entries for the *Linguoterritorial Dictionary of Latgale* (*Latgales lingvoteritoriālajai vārdnīcai*) (2012), which, due to its large size, was published as two volumes. This interdisciplinary dictionary is an interesting and important source of information for several reasons: 1) the dictionary incorporates information on the cities and geographic locations of Latgale, its significant persons (e.g., F. Kemps, F. Trasuns, A. Kūkojs, J. Streičs), all of the ethnicities living in Latgale, and themes relating to everyday life (e.g., language, All Souls' Day, bread, ceramics, and so on); 2) the headword for every entry is examined as a multifaceted concept from several different perspectives: its linguistic, mythical or folkloric, cultural, community or economic perspectives; 3) an extensive list of sources and referenced literature is given after every entry, which may prove useful for further study; 4) the dictionary is published as two volumes – one volume is in Latgalian and English, the other in Latvian and Russian; 5) the translation of the entries into the Latgalian written language serves as a basis for the codification of the written language and the development of terminology; 6) the dictionary is richly illustrated.

During the course of the project, other less extensive though no less important publications were also prepared: the informational publication *Latgalian CV: from ancient times to the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (*Latgalieša CV: no senlaikiem līdz 21. gadsimtam*) (editor-in-chief: S. Lazdiņa, in 2011; the second expanded edition was published with the financial support of the Latvian Ministry of Culture in 2015) in Latvian, English, and Russian, with examples in the Latgalian written language; the guidebook *Multicultural Rēzekne. Learn about linguistic and cultural diversity in Rēzekne!* (*Multikulturālā Rēzekne. Iepazīsti valodu un kultūru daudzveidību Rēzeknē!*) (2011), which offers a route with 21 points of interest, each of which are described according to several different written language traditions;

The Linguoterritorial  
Dictionary of Latgale

Informational materials

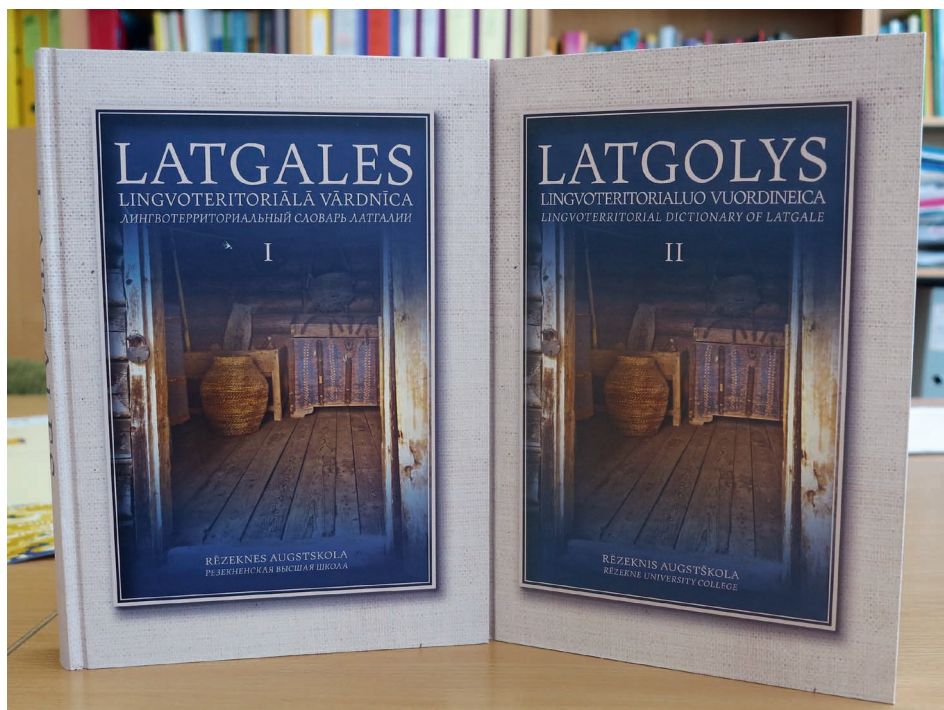


Figure 88. *The Linguoterritorial Dictionary of Latgale (Latgolys lingvoteritorialuo vuordineica / Latgales lingvoteritoriālā vārdnīca)*. Photo: RA publicity photo

and the educational learning resource *The Latgalian Language in the Context of the Regional and Minority Languages of Europe (Latgaliešu valoda Eiropas reģionālo un minoritāšu valodu kontekstā)* (Pošeiko, Lazdiņa, Marten 2011), which explains the difference between a language and a dialect, and also describes the practice in Europe for resolving questions relating to regional and minority languages.

A project work group consisting six researchers (H. Marten, S. Lazdiņa, S. Pošeiko, I. Matisovs, O. Senkāne, S. Murinska) and led by linguist Heiko Marten began serious linguistic trials and further development of approaches to the linguistic landscape, analysis and interpretation of collected data; they also directed their attention to the use and conditions for the choice of the Latgalian written language in public texts (Marten 2012, Marten, Lazdiņa, Pošeiko, Murinska 2012, Pošeiko 2012a, Lazdiņa 2013).

Latgalian Studies as part  
of the linguistic landscape

#### Dictionary design

- 2) Between 2007 and 2013, RA, in cooperation with Vytautas Magnus University and the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science at the University of Latvia, and with help from a cross-border cooperation program between Latvia and Lithuania, carried out the project Development of a Research Infrastructure for Humanities Education in Eastern Latvia and in Lithuania (Humanitārās izglītības pētniecības infrastruktūras izveide Austrumlatvijā, Lietuvā) (<http://hipilatlit.ru.lv/lv/>). The project resulted in

the completion of two language corpora: a monolingual corpus – *Contemporary Latgalian Text Corpus* (*Mūsdienu latgaliešu tekstu korpuss*) (1 million word uses), and a bilingual corpus – *Lithuanian-Latvian-Lithuanian Parallel Text Corpus* (*Lietuviešu-latviešu-lietuviešu paralēlo tekstu korpuss*) (8 million word uses), as well as an electronic trilingual dictionary – *Lithuanian-Latvian-Latgalian Dictionary* (*Lietuviešu-latviešu-latgaliešu vārdnīca*) (10,000 entries), which provides not only a translation of a word into two languages, but also its morphological description and the frequency of the word's use in the *Frequency Dictionary* (*Biežuma vārdnīca*) corpus. These materials are a valuable contribution to the development of Latgalian lexicology and Baltic linguistics.

- 3) Between 2012 and 2014, the cross-border project Virtual Past – Museum Future (Virtuālā pagātne – muzeju nākotne) (<http://futureofmuseums.eu/lv>) was implemented at RA, during which the Latvian language version of the *Linguoterritorial Dictionary of Latgale* (*Latgales lingvoteritoriālās vārdnīca*) was converted into a virtual gallery and an educational computer game about Latgale, entitled *Go Over There, Who Knows Where, Bring Back That, Who Knows What* (*Aizej tur, nezin kur, atnes to, nezin ko*) was developed for high school and college students in Latgalian and English (I. Šuplinska, in cooperation with SIA MSI-IDI). This interactive computer game was presented at events at schools in Latgale and RTA (e.g., on Scientists' Night (Zinātnieku nakts)). Students and teachers found the game to be an interesting, informative, educational activity as well as a fun source of entertainment. In 2015, the project received the European Union Cross-Border Award for Innovative Methodology.

Interactive materials

- 4) Between 2014 and 2016, three RTA researchers (S. Lazdiņa, I. Šuplinska and S. Pošeiko) were involved in an international (9-country) project entitled Languages in Open Educational Resources<sup>5</sup>, part of the Lifelong Education Program of the European Commission. One of the tasks of this program is to organize courses for educators, teaching them the practical use of digital tools for the design of student exercises. At the end of the course, the educators uploaded to the project website the learning materials they had developed; a portion of these can be used for regional studies and are intended for learning the Latgalian written language. These materials expand the domains in which the language functions by showing students the use of the language in its written and spoken forms.

The design of learning materials

<sup>5</sup> The project abbreviation is LangOER and the project homepage is at: <http://langoer.eun.org/>

## Other lexicographical publications

After a four-year interruption, in 2013, the work of the Latgalian Written Language Subcommittee (composed of 12 members) resumed. It resolves questions relating to the codification and standardization of the Latgalian written language. For example, the assigning of official parallel designations in the Latgalian written language to nature sites as well as the development of standards for the Latgalian written language and primary and secondary education have previously been addressed (more on the history of the establishment of the subcommittee and its work can be found in Vulāne 2016, 144-161).

The lexicographical corpus of the Latgalian written language published up to 2010 (e.g., *Latgaļu volūdas vārdu krājums* (*Latgalian Language Vocabulary*) by A. Bērkalns in 2007; *Latgaļu volūdys vuordineica* (*Dictionary of the Latgalian Language*) by A. Slišāns in 2009) is supplemented by the *Latgaliešu-latviešu vārdnīca* (*Latgalian-Latvian Dictionary*) (2011), which contains 4000 words and was compiled by Latgalian writer, specialist in literature, and Daugavpils University docent Valentīns Lukaševičs. The book reflects the author's own individual speech and demonstrates a collection from various dialects. Important lexicographical material is also found in the 2014 *Purlovas grāmata* (*The Purlova Book*) by Juris Cibulš, which provides an overview of the phonetics and grammar of the Purlova dialect of Balvi municipality, as well as providing several written examples and a dictionary of words unique to the Purlova dialect.

## Latgalian Studies on the "Linguistic Map"

At the same time, 10 Latvian linguists have developed an interactive application – The Development of Latvian Linguistics: an Informative Educational Electronic Map (*Latviešu valodniecības attīstība: informatīvi izglītojoša elektroniskā karte*) (short form Linguistic Map (*Lingvistiskā karte*), <http://www.lingvistiskakarte.lv/info/1>) as part of an order from the LVA for the study of the Latvian language and the history of linguistics. A portion of the entries in the application are associated with questions relating to Latgalian Studies (to publications, linguists, scientific events), and also offer users hyperlinks to original language examples prepared by I. Šuplinska.

## 6.2. Education and culture

According to statistics from the 2011 Latvian National Census, 8.8% of Latvia's residents and 5.7% of children up to the age of 17 speak Latgalian in everyday life. "Latgalian is spoken the most in the Latgale region – 35.5% of all residents; however, by only 27% of children up to the age of 17. At the same time, in Cibla municipality, 87.5% of the municipality's residents, among them 85.3% of children up to the age of 17, speak [Latgalian] in everyday life" (Spārīte 2013, 13). As these statistics show, children and young people communicate in Latgalian less than middle-aged and older residents. One possible reason for this situation is insufficient proficiency in this variety of Latvian, which could be especially applied to literacy in written Latgalian, which is not learned, because parents generally

do not know how to write correctly and only a selection of schools in Latgale teach the Latgalian written language (e.g., Nautrēni and Galēni primary schools, Kārsava, Baltnava, Dagda secondary schools. For more see Marten, Šuplinska, Lazdiņa 2009).

VISC in cooperation with the Association of Latgalian Language, Literature, and Cultural History Teachers (Latgaliešu valodas, literatūras un kultūrvēstures skolotāju asociāciju – LVLKSA) has developed standards for a primary education school subject “The Latgalian Written Language for Grades 4–9”<sup>6</sup> (Latgaliešu rakstu valoda 4.–9. klasei) and a general education school subject “The Latgalian Written Language”<sup>7</sup> (Latgaliešu rakstu valoda). Since 2013, the schools in the city of Rēzekne have offered regional studies as an elective subject with the Latgalian written language taught as part of it. Within higher education, the Latgalian Written Language can be learned as part of linguistics programs: at RTA as the required Latgalian Studies module, at Daugavpils University and the University of Latvia optionally or as a subject within particular courses. Currently, the inclusion of regional studies as part of a general education program is being actively discussed within various work groups, which are evaluating several possibilities (e.g., as a separate subject, an optional subject, a part of other subjects).

Still, learning materials are necessary for practical work such as regional studies and mastery of the Latgalian written language. During the last five years, a number of educational materials of an interdisciplinary character have been published; these are useful for studying the language as well as learning about the culture, history, geography, and economy of the Latgale region (e.g., the DVD and folklore and other materials published by RTA; for more see Tables 23 and 24).

The materials developed by linguists Lidiya Leikuma and Juris Cibuļs in 2014 are intended for the study of the Latgalian written language without prior knowledge: the first digital primer *Skreineite. Vuicūs laseit* for learning to read Latgalian and the workbook *Skreineite. Vuicūs raksteit* for learning to write Latgalian, and also instructional materials for teachers. The primer is interesting in that it is designed according to the analytic-synthetic sound method, in other words, the letters to be learned are not arranged in alphabetical order, but according to the phonetic peculiarities of the language and the degree of difficulty in learning them. The learning materials were developed with support from the LVA and are freely available to everyone electronically on the LVA homepage (<http://maciun-macies.valoda.lv/valodas-apguve/e-materiali/skolai>).

For beginner-level language study (especially for learning vocabulary), the 20 video activities (as of 2015) developed with the financial support of the association Bruoli un Muosys (Brothers and Sisters) and the VKF (Valsts Kultūrkapitāla

Learning materials:  
the digital primer

Video activities

<sup>6</sup> The standards for the primary education school subject the Latgalian Written Language for Grades 4–9 are available here: [http://visc.gov.lv/vispizglitiba/saturs/dokumenti/standarti/latg\\_val\\_stand\\_4\\_9.pdf](http://visc.gov.lv/vispizglitiba/saturs/dokumenti/standarti/latg_val_stand_4_9.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> The standards for the general education school subject the Latgalian Written Language are available here: [http://visc.gov.lv/vispizglitiba/saturs/dokumenti/standarti/latg\\_val\\_stand\\_10\\_12.pdf](http://visc.gov.lv/vispizglitiba/saturs/dokumenti/standarti/latg_val_stand_10_12.pdf).

**Informal Learning  
Methods**

fonds – the State Culture Capital Foundation), AS Latvijas valsts meži (The National Forests of Latvia), and Latgales reģiona attīstības aģentūra (The Latgale Region Development Agency). In these videos, individuals familiar in society teach words and topical phrases; these videos are available online to anyone interested (<http://www.lakuga.lv/?s=LATGAL%C4%AA%C5%A0U+VOL%C5%AADYS+APVUICEIBA+%C4%AASUOCIEJIM&x=0&y=0>).

Likewise, a number of different informal learning methods are of significant importance: entertainment and cultural events, interactive activities, and contests. These show that the learning process is an interesting and attractive activity in which personal experience, knowledge, and abilities are connected with newly learned information. Such activities are not an innovation, but instead a continuation of already existing traditions – a number of educators in Latgale have tried out various instructional methods, encouraging their students to write scientific research studies about themes related to their immediate environment (folklore, language, literature, history), organizing themed events and involving these in the Latgalian-related events held in cities, municipalities, and the Latgale region. However, these types of indirect educational activities also have an educational character, and serve to provide basic information about language (its systems, the characteristics of speech and writing) and the uniqueness of the municipality or to strengthen and deepen existing knowledge. These, however, have a minimal impact on the systematic learning of language and regional studies.

**A museum collection for  
language acquisition**

One of the methods for learning the spoken form of the language has often been folklore; students actively participate in folklore groups and university-organized folklore expeditions. Museums and libraries make an important contribution to addressing the issues at the focus of Latgalian Studies; some of the most noteworthy among these include the philosopher and poet Roberts Mūks' Museum in Galēni (Riebiņi municipality); the Bread Museum (Maizes muzejs) in Aglona; and the Kolnasāta museum in Sakstagals (located in Rēzekne municipality) devoted to Francis Trasuns – a key figure in the Latgale National Awakening, writer, and publicist. The museum contains one of the most extensive collections of Latgalian literature and other sources, and it regularly organizes educational events.

**The speech competition  
and literary project  
competition**

Since in 2001, LVLKSA in cooperation with RTA and the Rēzekne State High School #1 (Rēzeknes Valsts 1. ģimnāzija) has organized an annual on-stage speech competition called Voulyudzāni, and a Latgalian written language and cultural history competition for participants of different ages (<http://www.rvlg.lv/index.php/vuolyudzani/>). Every year there are also two student literary project competitions: a competition in Galēni (Riebiņi municipality) for new creative work dedicated to R. Mūks, and the creative work competition of writer Naaizmērstule (actual name: Rozālija Tabina) in Aglona. It is positive that participants submit work to the judges increasingly often in Latgalian, thereby developing their literary creativity and writing abilities.

Also, since 2004, the summer school “Atzolys” has been organized by LgSC participants and other young people. Here, the Latgalian written language, literature, cultural history, traditions, and folklore are taught mainly through practical activities. LVLKSA organizes summer courses and a camp called Vosoruošona (from 2000-2006 and since 2012) for teachers and students from Latgale. These strengthen Latgalian identity, teach the cultural history of Latgale and provide an opportunity for teachers to share their experience, teaching programs, and materials. In 2015, LKB, in cooperation with RTA and the local governments of the municipalities within Latgale, began a new tradition: The N. Rancāns Award for the Excellent Educators of Latgale (N. Rancāna balva izciliem Latgales pedagogiem), which recognizes excellent contributions in education, and in encouraging and cultivating Latvian and Latgalian traditions among young people.

The summer school and camp

LgSC provides significant investment into securing informal education and periodically organizes various educational events. For example, in 2014 and 2015, it organized events for learning the Latgalian written language in various cities in Latvia (Rīga, Daugavpils, Rēzekne, Jelgava) where participants could become acquainted with the rules of the Latgalian written language and develop their writing abilities. Likewise, the event series La-La-Dra or Latgalīts Latgalīšam Draugs (A Latgalian is a Friend to a Latgalian), which features literary and musical performances, themed discussions and activities, which take place in different cities, and the literary musical event Tievanānu pavasars or Tievanānu čulans in Jaunviļāni at which Latgalian musicians, writers, and those wishing to sing, write, and work are brought together. The short description of both events shows that in addition to having a cultural and entertainment function, it also has an educational function, as it brings together young people and demonstrates that communication in Latgalian allows one to know one's local identity and to experience local cultural practice in a contemporary way.

Cultural events

Events such as Andreja diena (Day of Andrejs) are intended not only for teenagers and other young people. Since 1998, a literary showcase has taken place every year at RTA featuring debut student works and those by the most well-known Latgalian writers (including A. Rancāne, V. Lukaševičs, L. Rundāne, L. Seiksta-Deksne, Raibīs) and at which the nomination is made for best presentation and the main annual award is presented – Āksta cepure (Šuplinska 2012a, 41). Also, there is the oldest Latgalian festival of love poetry and songs Upītes uobeļduorzs, which has taken place since 2002 and features literary and musical performances in the Upīte Hall (Upītes tautas nams) in Viļaka municipality.

Professional and amateur theaters have performed plays in Latgalian. For example, *Kleperņiku pogosta zvaigzne* (*The Star of Kleperņiki Parish*) (2010) at the Daugavpils Theater and *Piļsātā nikod napalīk tymss* (*It Never Gets Dark in the City*) (2012) at the Latgalian Poetry Theater. The Palāda Theater in Baltnava is the most well-known and has been especially rich in performances, for example, the *Ontans un Anne* (*Ontans and Anne*) play series, which was also the inspiration for a performance at the Latgola.lv National Theater, and *Lauku kūrorts*

Theater in Latgalian

*piļsātņikim* (*Country Resort for the City-dweller*) in 2011. Original works of art are found at the multimedia performance space Gors, for example, the performance *Francis* (2014) dedicated to F. Trasuns, which also served a metalinguistic function with the actors having to perform a political discussion in Latgalian about the Latgalian written language in the twentieth century.

#### Publications in Latgalian

Various publications in a selection of literary styles and genres for various age groups have been published as both books and electronically in the Latgalian written language by the Latgale Culture Center, LgSC, RTA, the Daugavpils University publishing house Saule, and other publishers (See Tables 23 and 24). Poetry and short prose works are better represented, more extensive prose and works of drama are less common. At the same time, compared with the previous decade, the number of books intended for children has increased. The only translation from English is *Alise Breinumzemē* (*Alice in Wonderland*) (2015), which continues to be frequently presented in an interactive way at a variety of schools, libraries, and cultural institutions around Latgale.

#### Music

With respect to music, this period is characterized by a number of festivals devoted to Latgalian music (e.g., Osvalds since 1995 in Baltinava, Muzykys Skrytuļs since 2005 in Līksna) and concerts by Latgalian musicians and groups in city and municipality festivals across Latgale as well as albums (see Table 24) and published video clips. The diversity of musical styles and genres is fairly broad, with music in the “šlāgeris” style, pop music, rock music, and folk music available in Latgalian as individual songs or entire albums (see also Gusāns 2011).



Figure 89. A few music albums in Latgalian. Photo: Ingars Gusāns



Figure 90. The Annual Latgale Cultural Award “Boņuks” ceremony in 2014. Photo: Māris Justs

Cinema is characterized by documentary films about Latgale and its most well-known individuals as well as attempts by the production group Bildys to develop a tradition of more popular films in Latgalian (see Table 24).

In order to evaluate educational, artistic, literary, and cultural works and activities, the Annual Latgale Cultural Award “Boņuks” was created in 2008. Nominations are made for several different fields (e.g., Person of the Year, Teacher of the Year, Music Debut of the Year, Most Noteworthy Publication in the Press) in order to look back at a cross-section of the previous year, to recognize the most significant works and their authors as well as to motivate others to create new works (Gusāns 2012, 98).

**The Annual Latgale Cultural Award**

### 6.3. Mass media and the linguistic landscape

The linguistic landscape is associated with such spoken and written text forms as television and radio broadcasts, news reports and commercials, websites (news portals, blogs, online forums), periodicals (newspapers, magazines, calendars), and language present in the public space (posters, notices, store names, graffiti).

Clearly, the Latgalian written language is most seen and read and its spoken form most heard on Latgale regional mass media sources where the need for it is greatest. Latgale Regional Television (Latgales Reģionālā televīzija) offers its viewers news clips and themed series in Latgalian. Examples include the program series *Latgolys rubežys vaicojūt* (2014-2015), which focuses on places in Latgale; its ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, and its public personalities; the series *Gostūs* (2014-2015) featuring interviews with well-known people in soci-

**Television and radio broadcasts**

ety; and also the series *Pa Sovam* (2015), which focuses on different aspects of life in Latgale (e.g., economics, cuisine, education, tourism, and so on).

The regional radio station Latgolys radeja (Radio Latgale) is the only medium that provides information to its audience exclusively in Latgalian, thereby supporting the preservation and development of spoken Latgalian language and music. Radio material in Latgalian is also regularly produced by the production group SIA Lietišķā Latgale, which every week prepares and broadcasts Ef-Ei, Radio Marija Latvija (Radio Mary Latvia), Divu Krastu Radio (Two Shores Radio), and a program devoted to the cultural history and sociopolitics of Latgale, *Pi myusim Latgolā* (*With us in Latgale*) (since 2013) for Latgolys radeja, which has in the past also broadcast the themed programs *Breivdīnuos iz Latgolū* and *Pa dobys stygom pi myusim Latgolā* (both in 2015). At the same time, musician and program director Aigars Runčis along with Justīne Savitska produce the LR1 program *Kolnasāta* (since 2012) where Latgale and Latgalian events around the world are discussed every Saturday for 30 minutes. The program contains several themed sections, including “Nedēļas notikumu lade” (“Events of the Week”), which focuses on current events in the social, economic, cultural, and sporting life of Latgale, an interview with a public personality who discusses his or her life story, accomplishments, goals, and views on topics important to Latgale and Latvia, and also a Latgalian dictionary and interesting audio language learning material prepared by V. Lukaševičs.

#### Online publications and websites

Currently the websites *Latgalīšu kultūras gazeta* (*Latgalian Cultural Gazette*) (<http://www.lakuga.lv/>) and *LgSC* (<http://lgsc.lv/>) are the most active in publishing the news and contain information on literature, culture (art, music, cinema, and theater), education, and other questions of interest to society as well as commercials for events, works of fiction, reviews, and materials for learning the Latgalian written language (a dictionary, exercises, a description of Latgalian orthographic rules). Both of these websites, in addition to their main function of disseminating information on current events, also have the function of teaching and popularizing the written Latgalian language.

Texts in Latgalian can also be found in a selection of blogs (<http://www.naktineica.lv/>, <https://raibiis.wordpress.com/>, <http://skreine.org>, and others), the websites of musicians and music groups, data collections online (e.g., The Cultural Historical Database (Kultūrvēstures datubāze) on the website of the Ludza City Library <http://www.ludzasbiblio.lv/lv/vecaks-lg>), and the online store *Taiseits Latgolā* (*Made in Latgale*) (<http://www.taiseitslatgola.lv/veikals-1/>), where it is possible to purchase Latgalian books, souvenirs, music CDs, maps, and other products (for more on this see Pošeiko 2012a, 135–150). A negative trend can be seen here – due to a lack of resources, a number of websites created in the early 2000s and which contained information published in Latgalian, are now, due to a variety of reasons, no longer active or available.

#### Publications in newspapers and magazines

The Latgalian written language is used periodically in local newspapers, in supplements, on pages devoted to the topic, and in the largest regional and mu-

municipality newspapers and magazines. *Rēzeknes Vēstis* (*The Rēzekne News*) has published a supplement *Mōras Zeme* (*The Land of Māra = Terra Mariana*) for an extended period of time now; currently a page and the news are published in Latgalian in *Vietējā Latgales Avīze* (*The Local Newspaper of Latgale*) (since 2014) as well as individual articles, and advertisements in the magazine *A12 – ceļš uz Latgali* (*The A12 – the Road to Latgale*) (since 2012). The supplement to *Latgales Laiks* (*Time of Latgale*) entitled *Latgališu Gazeta* (*The Latgalian Gazette*) is published every month, though increasingly less often in Latgalian; likewise, there are occasional articles in the newspapers *Ludzas Zeme* (*The Land of Ludza*) and *Vaduguns* (*Leading Light*).

“The largest proportion of publications are devoted to language, literature, history – these are descriptions of new books, thoughts regarding orthographic questions, descriptions of trips, information on events in family history as well as an article series on religious themes: confession, events on the Christian calendar, discussions about holiness, ethics, morality [...] One of the most visible and longest-published magazines is the Catholic publication *Katōļu Dzeive* (*Catholic Life*) (1989–2014), which published materials in Latvian and the Latgalian written language, literary supplements containing original works in Latgalian.” (Murinska-Gaile 2015, 184–187)

At the same time, the cultural historical and literary yearbook *Tāvu zemes kalendars* (*Homeland Calendar*) (since 1939) continues to be published regularly “with popular scientific articles on farming and medicine, cultural historical articles describing studies of the region, and literary works” (Pošeiko 2012b, 737–738) and the literary almanac *Olūts* (since 1943) with “original literature, articles on literary critique and cultural history” (Šuplinska 2012b, 519).

Information in Latgalian is also published in national media sources, though, of course, its use is less frequent in terms of air time (TV and radio) and space (in press publications). However, this shows those consuming these resources that Latvian has several varieties and that there are two Latvian written traditions and various spoken forms. Already in its third season, the program *Cytaidi latviskais* (*Differently Latvian*) (<http://ltv.lsm.lv/lv/dokumentalie/cytaidi-latviskais/>) is a documentary series with subtitles in the Latvian literary language (since 2013) and is hosted by V. Lukaševičs. The program focuses on Latgalian folklore, music, applied art, and the diversity of trades; it also shows conversations with enterprising and focused individuals from around Latgale. It received a nomination for Achievement of the Year in the Audiovisual Arts at the 2013 Annual Latgale Cultural Award “Boņuks”. In addition, the magazine *Ir* publishes a column in the Latgalian written language once a month.

During the last decade, the number of public texts written in Latgalian has noticeably increased in the cities and rural centers of Latgale. This can be seen more in the names of shops, hotels, cafés, and guesthouses (e.g., the Gors concert hall and the Gords restaurant within it, the Zeimuļs Youth Center of Eastern Latvia, the kebab shop Ausmeņa Kebabs, the butcher shop Sātys, and others), on posters,

Broadcasts in national mass media sources

Public texts

direction markers, signs with names of homes (especially in rural areas), graffiti, the names used for products and services (e.g., grocery store products and food), tourist information signs. Likewise, Latgalian text (individual words, shorter or longer phrases) is published on cups, bags, magnets, T-shirts, personalized vehicle number plates, postcards, greeting cards, and calendars. Board games are also available in Latgalian (see also Pošeiko 2011, 2012c, Lazdiņa 2012, 2013). However, the majority of public information continues to have a symbolic function.

It should also be noted that a number of associations, organizations, and foundations use the Latgalian written language in their documentation (in contracts, example acts, the minutes from meetings) (e.g., LgSC, Latgolys Saeima, LV-LKSA – Šuplinska 2013).

#### 6.4. Emphases for future work

During the period at the focus of this study, the accomplished work in developing and protecting the Latgalian written language has ensured its use across a wide spectrum; Latgalian “lives” in the diversity of spoken and written texts. The majority of projects have yielded visible results. However, their continuity into the future cannot always be guaranteed and stable support for the development of the language, research, and also its use, is noticeably absent. In addition, the endangerment of the language is influenced by the limited opportunities for learning it and by its insufficient use by children and young people for communication.

Returning to the Latgalian Congress mentioned in the introduction, it should be noted that there was an order in 2015 by Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma to form a work group (headed by Minister of Culture Dace Melbārde) tasked with preparing festival events, planning conferences, and resolving currently topical questions. The most important events planned for May 2017 are: the conference at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Gathering of Latgalians, the scientific discussion *The Historical and Legal Significance of the Rēzekne Congress and its Role in Latvia's Statehood and Constitution (1917. gada Rēzeknes kongresa vēsturiskā un juridiskā nozīme un loma Latvijas valstiskumā un Satversmē)* and the presentation of the award to the winner of The N. Rancāns Award for the Excellent Educators of Latgale (N. Rancāna balva izciliem Latgales pedagogiem).

It is very important to also henceforth preserve the regularity of educational, scientific, and cultural events and to promote the preparation and publishing of new contemporary publications (e.g., workbooks, applications, materials for interactive whiteboards) that will allow a target audience encompassing different age groups and proficiency levels to learn the Latgalian written language in an engaging way. Likewise, work must be continued in the context of the standard established for the Regional Studies school subject and also on deciding on how it is to be instituted in practice.

| Bibliographic information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Language of Publication                 | Year                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Latgalistikys kongresa materiali.</i><br>( <i>Latgalian Studies Conference Materials</i> )<br>Electronic version: <a href="http://www.lu.lv/filol/latgalistica/index.htm">http://www.lu.lv/filol/latgalistica/index.htm</a>                                                                         | Humanities journal <i>Via Latgalica</i><br>series, Nos. 2-4                                                                                                                                                   | lvs, ltg,<br>eng, deu, rus <sup>1</sup> | 2010<br>2011<br>2012                 |
| <i>Via Latgalica.</i><br>Electronic version: <a href="http://www.ru.lv/zinatniskie_rakstu_krajumi">http://www.ru.lv/zinatniskie_rakstu_krajumi</a><br>(Nos. 3-6) and<br><a href="http://journals.ru.lv/index.php/LATG/issue/archive">http://journals.ru.lv/index.php/LATG/issue/archive</a><br>(No. 7) | Humanities journal,<br>Nos. 3-7                                                                                                                                                                               | lvs, ltg,<br>eng, rus                   | 2010<br>2012<br>2013<br>2014<br>2015 |
| Širina V. <i>Dzeiviniķu stāstēni</i> . [Animal Tales] Rēzekne: LKCI, 92 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Literary stories                                                                                                                                                                                              | ltg                                     | 2010                                 |
| Varšlavāne D. S. <i>Pretspāki</i> . [Counterforces] Rēzekne: LKCI, 78 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Poetry collection                                                                                                                                                                                             | ltg                                     | 2010                                 |
| Varšlavāne D. S. <i>"Pūdeņu" dārgumi</i> . [The Riches of "Pūdeņi"] Rēzekne: LKCI, 200 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Poetry collection                                                                                                                                                                                             | ltg                                     | 2010                                 |
| Lukaševičs V. <i>Latgaliešu-latviešu vārdnīca</i> . [Latgalian-Latvian Dictionary] Daugavpils: DU apgāds "Saulē", 232 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                             | Dictionary with 4000 words                                                                                                                                                                                    | ltg, lvs                                | 2011                                 |
| Lukaševičs V. <i>Balti burti</i> . [White Letters] Rēzekne: LKCI, 110 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Poetry collection                                                                                                                                                                                             | ltg                                     | 2011                                 |
| Latgales Studentu centrs (ed.). <i>Es soku, tu soki. Puosokys par krīzi</i> . [I say, you say. Stories about the crisis] Rīga: Valters un Rapa.                                                                                                                                                        | 6 booklets. Latgalian folk tales, A. Jurdžs' recipe for a frugal life, Latgalian literary stories, excerpts from the twentieth century Latgalian press, funny stories, stories for children and young people. | ltg                                     | 2011                                 |
| Širins L. <i>Nūstrōpeitō pīkabe</i> . [Punished Trailer] Rēzekne: Gaisma L, 133 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Stories                                                                                                                                                                                                       | ltg                                     | 2011                                 |
| Vasiļevskis J. <i>Antikrista nogūs</i> . [In the Antichrist's Claws] Rēzekne: LKCI, 166 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                           | The 20 <sup>th</sup> century memoirs of Catholic minister, educator, scientist Jans Vasiļevskis. Reprint. (first published in 1925).                                                                          | ltg                                     | 2011                                 |
| Lazdiņa S. (managing editor). <i>Latgalieša CV no senlaikiem līdz 21. gadsimtam</i> . [Latgalian CV: from ancient times to the 21 <sup>st</sup> century] Rēzekne: RA, 48 pgs.                                                                                                                          | Booklet about the history of Latgale, its literature, media, trades, education, and religion. A short dictionary, examples of the Latgalian written language.                                                 | lvs, rus, eng, ltg                      | 2011<br>2015                         |
| Murinska S., Senkāne O. <i>Multikulturālā Rēzekne. Iepazīsti valodu un kultūru daudzveidību Rēzeknē!</i> [Multicultural Rēzekne. Learn about Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Rēzekne!]                                                                                                            | A guide to the cultural historical places in Rēzekne with descriptions given in various written traditions.                                                                                                   | ltg, lvs,<br>eng,<br>rus,<br>yid        | 2011                                 |
| Pošeiko S., Lazdiņa S., Martens H. <i>Latgaliešu valoda Eiropas reģionālo un minoritāšu valodu kontekstā</i> [The Latgalian Language in the Context of the Regional and Minority Languages of Europe]                                                                                                  | An explanation of the terms "language", "state language", "regional language", "autochthonous language", "dialect" and an introduction to the minority and regional language situation of Europe.             | lvs, ltg                                | 2011                                 |
| Laurinoviča-Pronevska H. <i>Tysmi muokūni sasavalk</i> . [Dark Clouds Piling Up] Rēzekne: LKCI, 150 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                               | Autobiographical novel                                                                                                                                                                                        | ltg                                     | 2011                                 |

| Bibliographic information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                              | Language of Publication | Year |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------|
| Šuplinska I. (scientific editor). <i>Latgales lingvoteritoriālā vārdnīca</i> . [Latgalian Linguoterritorial Dictionary] 2 volumes. Rēzekne: RA, both volumes, 875 pgs.<br>Online version: <a href="http://futureofmuseums.eu/lv/virtual-gallery/rezekne-higher-education-institution-collections/subcollections/?collection=rezekne-higher-education-institution">http://futureofmuseums.eu/lv/virtual-gallery/rezekne-higher-education-institution-collections/subcollections/?collection=rezekne-higher-education-institution</a> | An illustrated encyclopedic information source about 300 concepts characterizing Latgale and Latgalians.                                                                                             | lvs, Itg, rus, eng      | 2012 |
| Lazdiņa S. (managing editor). <i>Ausmas zeme</i> . [The Land of Dawn] Rēzekne: RA, 476 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | An illustrated encyclopedic publication for younger students about noteworthy and ambitious individuals, businesses as well as points of interest in 15 cities and 19 municipalities across Latgale. | lvs, Itg                | 2012 |
| Tjarve E. <i>Aiz mežim snīgōtim</i> . [Beyond the Snowy Forests] Rēzekne: LKCI, 161 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Poetry collection                                                                                                                                                                                    | Itg                     | 2012 |
| Skuja M. <i>Naziņā</i> . [Unknowing] Rēzekne: LKCI, 100 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Poetry collection                                                                                                                                                                                    | Itg                     | 2012 |
| Tārauda I. <i>Boltais šokolads</i> . [White Chocolate] Latgolys Studentu centrs, 156 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Poetry collection                                                                                                                                                                                    | Itg                     | 2012 |
| Rancāne A. <i>Pylņi kārmani dabasu / Bezdelīgu pasts</i> . [Pockets Full of Skies / Messenger Swallows] Latgolys Studentu centrs, 61, 39 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Poetry collection                                                                                                                                                                                    | Itg, lvs                | 2012 |
| Strods P. <i>Pareizraksteibas vōrdineica</i> . [Dictionary of Correct Spelling] LKCI, 404 pgs.<br>Online version: <a href="http://ldb.lv/pspv/">http://ldb.lv/pspv/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Reprint<br>(first edition in 1933)                                                                                                                                                                   | Itg                     | 2012 |
| <i>Mūsdienų latgaliešu tekstu korpus</i> . [Contemporary Latgalian Text Corpus] Available at: <a href="http://hipilatlit.ru.lv/bonito/run.cgi/first_form">http://hipilatlit.ru.lv/bonito/run.cgi/first_form</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Corpus of 1 million word uses                                                                                                                                                                        | Itg                     | 2013 |
| <i>Lietuviešu-latviešu-latgaliešu vārdnīca</i> . [Lithuanian-Latvian-Latgalian Dictionary] Authors: L. Leikuma, L. Bernāne, J. Cibulšs, A. Butkus, V. Butkiene, K. Vaisvalavičiene, I. Sperga. Available at: <a href="http://hipilatlit.ru.lv/dictionary/lv/dictionary.html">http://hipilatlit.ru.lv/dictionary/lv/dictionary.html</a>                                                                                                                                                                                              | An electronic dictionary containing 10,000 entries                                                                                                                                                   | lit, lvs, Itg           | 2013 |
| Voguls V. <i>Sirds bolss</i> . [The Heart's Voice] Rīga: Zvaigzne, 156 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Poetry and photography collection                                                                                                                                                                    | Itg                     | 2013 |
| Šuplinska I. (ed.). <i>Pītūrys punkti bez pīturu. Andrejdānai – 15</i> . [Waypoints without Stops. St. Andrew's Day – 15] Rēzekne: RA, 120 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Poetry and short prose from RA students and graduates                                                                                                                                                | Itg, lvs                | 2013 |
| Rancāne A. (ed.). <i>Sarunas</i> . [Conversations] Rīga: Mansards                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | An anthology by the Eastern Latvian Literary Academy containing poetry from nine authors                                                                                                             | lvs, Itg                | 2013 |
| Afanasjeva O. (ed.). <i>Rēzekne 2013</i> . Rēzekne, 400 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Literary artistic almanac with the poetry and prose of 75 authors                                                                                                                                    | Itg, lvs, rus           | 2013 |
| Kalvāne E. <i>Atvosora</i> . [Indian Summer] SIA "Cymuss", 118 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Poetry collection                                                                                                                                                                                    | Itg                     | 2013 |
| Cibuļš J. <i>Purlovas grāmata</i> . [The Purlova Book] Rīga: Raudava, 430 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Cultural historical materials about Purlova and the Purlova dialect (its phonetics and grammar, speech and writing samples, and a dictionary)                                                        | In the Purlova dialect  | 2014 |

| Bibliographic information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Comment                                                                                     | Language of Publication | Year |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------|
| Šuplinska I., Drozdova I. <i>Aizej tur, nezin kur, atnes to, nezin ko</i> . [Go Over There, Who Knows Where, Bring Back That, Who Knows What]. Available at: <a href="http://futureofmuseums.eu/lv/rezekne-higher-education-institution-game/concepts-of-latgale">http://futureofmuseums.eu/lv/rezekne-higher-education-institution-game/concepts-of-latgale</a> | Educational computer game                                                                   | ltg, eng                | 2014 |
| Trasuns F. <i>Fabulas</i> [Fables] (ed. A. Eglājs). Rēzekne: LKCI, 107 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Reprint                                                                                     | ltg                     | 2014 |
| Spaitāns R. <i>Atceļņiki</i> . [Prodigal] Rēzekne: LKCI, 215 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Poetry collections                                                                          | ltg                     | 2014 |
| Cybuļs J., Leikuma L. <i>Skreineite. Vuicūs laseit</i> . [Skreineite. Learning to read] Available at: <a href="http://ldb.lv/skreineite_vl/">http://ldb.lv/skreineite_vl/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                    | Digital primer, beginners' learning book for learning to read in Latgalian                  | ltg                     | 2014 |
| Cybuļs J., Leikuma L. <i>Skreineite. Vuicūs rakstiet</i> . [Skreineite. Learning to read] Available at: <a href="http://ldb.lv/skreineite_vr">http://ldb.lv/skreineite_vr</a>                                                                                                                                                                                    | Workbook for learning to write in Latgalian                                                 | ltg                     | 2014 |
| Mileika A. <i>mūžīgā nepārtikusī stirna</i> . [The Ever Unprosperous Doe] Rīga: Latgolys Studentu centrs, 64 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Poetry collection                                                                           | lvs, ltg                | 2015 |
| Apine-Jugāne I. <i>Otkon giunu sapynus</i> . [Catching Dreams Again] Rēzekne: Latgales druka, 15 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Illustrated children's poetry collection                                                    | ltg                     | 2015 |
| Zuja A. (ed.). <i>Rositten</i> . Rēzekne: LKCI, 116 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Anthology of 9 authors' poetry                                                              | ltg, lvs                | 2015 |
| Sperga I. <i>Dzeiveiba</i> . [Life] Rīga: SIA "Cymuss", 163 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Story collection                                                                            | ltg                     | 2015 |
| Laurinoviča-Pronevska H. <i>Grymstušos salepas</i> . [The Sinking Islands] Rēzekne: LKCI, 404 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Autobiographical novel. Reprinted (first edition in 1964) with previously unpublished poems | ltg                     | 2015 |
| Cybuļs J., Krapacu Luce. <i>Īdzer ols, lai būduom ira gols!</i> [Drink Some Beer, So There Is No Hunger Here!] SIA "Raudava", 159 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Jokes and funny stories, comical situations                                                 | In the Purlova dialect  | 2015 |
| Danskovīte (A. Ločmele). <i>Ontans i Anne</i> . [Ontans and Anne] Rēzekne: Latgales druka, 398 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Plays                                                                                       | ltg, lvs                | 2015 |
| Sperga I. (ed.). <i>Munā sātā</i> . [In My Home] Z/s "Jākupāni", 18 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Latgalian folk songs, the poetry of O. Slišāns, and a long story by I. Sperga               | ltg                     | 2015 |
| Kerols L. <i>Alise Breinumu zemē</i> [Alice in Wonderland] (translated by E. Muizniece, ed. I. Šuplinska). Rēzekne: RA, 149 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Literary work, study exercises, and games                                                   | ltg                     | 2015 |
| Keiša I. <i>Muns laiks</i> . [My time] Rēzekne: LKCI, 214 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Essays                                                                                      | ltg                     | 2015 |
| <i>Latgales sirdspuksti</i> . [Latgale's Heartbeats] Balvi: "Bolvu olūts", 216 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Anthology of poetry and photography from 150 authors                                        | lvs, ltg, rus, bel      | 2015 |

| Bibliographic information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Comment                                             | Language of Publication | Year         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Graf Orzeļ, Ķnāzs Rasickis, Džereņi Pyrmāis Kūfirsts. <i>Dzeive bez mane Jākubpilī</i> . [Life Without Me in Jēkabpils] Available at: <a href="http://www.lakuga.lv/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Dzeive_bez_mane_Jakubpili_.pdf">http://www.lakuga.lv/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Dzeive_bez_mane_Jakubpili_.pdf</a>                                                                                                                                                                            | 3 autoru dzejoļi                                    | Itg                     | 2015         |
| Bierzeņš A. A. (ed.). <i>Duraceņš īsmīdnoy kienēņa meitu</i> . [The Dummy Made the King's Daughter Laugh] "Byumani", 30 pgs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Children's coloring book                            | Itg                     | 2015         |
| <i>Latgališu volūdys apvuičēiba īsuocējim</i> . [Latgalian Language Instruction for Beginners] Association "Bruoli un Muosys" (S. Poplavska, J. Rimicāns, text ed. E. Husare). Available at: <a href="http://www.lakuga.lv/?s=LATGAL%C4%AA%C5%AOU+VOL%C5%AADYS+APVUIČEIBA+%C4%AASUOCIEJIM&amp;x=0&amp;y=0">http://www.lakuga.lv/?s=LATGAL%C4%AA%C5%AOU+VOL%C5%AADYS+APVUIČEIBA+%C4%AASUOCIEJIM&amp;x=0&amp;y=0</a> Iv/?s=LATGAL%C4%AA%C5%AOU+VOL%C5%AADYS+APVUIČEIBA+%C4%AASUOCIEJIM&x=0&y=0 | 20 themed video lessons in Latgalian with subtitles | Itg                     | 2015<br>2016 |

Table 23. The most significant publications (2010-2015)

| Bibliographic information                                                                                 | Comment                                                                                                                      | Language of Publication | Year |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------|
| Sovvaļņiks. <i>Bolts susātivs</i> . [White Shadow]                                                        | Music album (CD) with the poetry of A. Kūkojs                                                                                | Itg                     | 2010 |
| Šuplinska I., Justs M. <i>Aulejis anekdoti</i> . [Auleja's Anecdotes]                                     | Materials from RTA folklore research trips. Information and study materials for students                                     | Itg, lvs                | 2010 |
| "Latgolys producentu grupa". <i>Latgališu puosokys i puorsokys</i> . [Latgalian Stories]                  | 31 Latgalian folk stories collected by I. Dukaļska and told by Latgalian writers, musicians, and cultural figures. (CD)      | Itg                     | 2010 |
| Lapiņš J., Lukaševičs V. <i>Latgales kultūras mantojums</i> . [The Cultural Heritage of Latgale]          | An educational film about Latgalian writers (DVD)                                                                            | lvs, Itg                | 2010 |
| Patrioti.lg. <i>Latgaleite</i> . [Latgalian Woman]                                                        | Music album (CD)                                                                                                             | Itg                     | 2011 |
| Latgolys entuziastu grupa "Bildis", E. Blinovs (dir.). <i>Latgolys laikadečs</i> . [Timequilt of Latgale] | A film about the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century history of Latgale as told through the story of one family in Latgale. (DVD) | Itg                     | 2011 |
| Streičs K., Streičs J. <i>Latgale – atvērtā sabiedrība</i> . [Latgale: Open to Society]                   | Documentary film about Latgale (DVD)                                                                                         | lvs, Itg                | 2011 |
| Dabasu Durovys. <i>Stycklu vītā skaņa</i> . [Sound instead of Glass]                                      | Music album (CD)                                                                                                             | Itg, lvs, eng           | 2012 |
| Galaktika. <i>Rāzna</i> . [Rāzna (a place name)]                                                          | Music album (CD)                                                                                                             | lvs, Itg                | 2012 |
| Ozoliņa B. <i>Caur sidraba birzi</i> . [Through a Silvery Birch Grove]                                    | Music album (CD)                                                                                                             | lvs, Itg                | 2012 |
| Šuplinska I., Justs M. <i>Ondrupinis roksti</i> . [Ondrupine Writings]                                    | Materials from RTA folklore research trips (DVD). Information and study materials for students                               | Itg, lvs                | 2012 |
| Ivdris V., Justs M. (dir., video dir.). <i>Laiku i myuža roksti</i> . [Writings on Life and Times]        | A documentary film devoted to the life and work of Latgalian writer Antons Rupaiņš (DVD)                                     | Itg                     | 2012 |

| Bibliographic information                                                                                                                                                                                         | Comment                                                                                                                                       | Language of Publication | Year |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------|
| Ozoliņš-Ozols J. (dir.). <i>Myužēigais kalenders</i> . [Eternal Calendar]                                                                                                                                         | A documentary film about Latgale's present and past as told through the experiences of two families during the changes of the last centuries. | ltg, lvs                | 2012 |
| Semjonovs S., Rēders G., Reiznieks D. <i>Latgale. Trīs stāsti</i> . [Latgale. Three Stories.] Available at: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eS9RM5rCe0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eS9RM5rCe0</a> | A film about Latgale's entrepreneurs, farmers, and those working in cultural fields as well as local government. (DVD)                        | lvs, ltg                | 2013 |
| Bez PVN. <i>Reits</i> . [Morning] Available at: <a href="http://grupabezpvn.wix.com/bezpvn#!muzyka/c61v">http://grupabezpvn.wix.com/bezpvn#!muzyka/c61v</a>                                                       | Music album (mp3)                                                                                                                             | ltg                     | 2013 |
| Bicāne L. <i>Es tikai ļaujūs</i> . [I just Let Go]                                                                                                                                                                | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | lvs, ltg, deu, eng, fra | 2013 |
| Ginc un Es. <i>Esi latgalīts</i> . [Be a Latgalian]                                                                                                                                                               | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | lvs, ltg                | 2013 |
| Kapļi. <i>Prauda par Madali</i> . [The Truth about Madale] Available at: <a href="http://projektskapli.wix.com/projektskapli#!album/clmkb">http://projektskapli.wix.com/projektskapli#!album/clmkb</a>            | Music album (mp3). The poetry of V. Lukaševičs serves as the basis for several of the songs.                                                  | ltg                     | 2013 |
| Ozoliņa B. <i>Sauli sēju</i> . [I Sowed the Sun]                                                                                                                                                                  | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | lvs, ltg                | 2013 |
| Latgolys entuziastu grupa "Bildis", Atpile-Jugane I., Blinovs E. (dir.). <i>Vīna vosora deļ vysu</i> . [One Summer for Everyone]                                                                                  | A film about the life of one specific present-day family (DVD)                                                                                | ltg                     | 2013 |
| Rikši. <i>Pa pyrmam</i> . [First of All]                                                                                                                                                                          | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | ltg                     | 2014 |
| Ivdris V., Justs M. (dir., video dir.). <i>Jōņa Klīdzēja dabasu puse</i> . [The Cardinal Point of Jōns Klīdzējs]                                                                                                  | A documentary film about Latgalian writer Jānis Klīdzējs (DVD)                                                                                | ltg                     | 2014 |
| Dabasu Durovys. <i>Bāka</i> . [Lighthouse]                                                                                                                                                                        | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | ltg, lvs                | 2014 |
| Green Novice. <i>Padebeši</i> . [Clouds] Available at: <a href="https://greennovice.bandcamp.com/">https://greennovice.bandcamp.com/</a>                                                                          | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | ltg                     | 2014 |
| Bicāne L. <i>Trīspuksti</i> . [Three Beats]                                                                                                                                                                       | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | lvs, ltg                | 2015 |
| Inga un Normunds. <i>Munai Latgolai</i> . [For my Latgale]                                                                                                                                                        | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | ltg                     | 2015 |
| Laimas Muzykanti. <i>Rodi</i> . [Relatives]                                                                                                                                                                       | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | ltg, lvs                | 2015 |
| Kapļi. <i>Ašņa dasys</i> . [Blood Sausage]                                                                                                                                                                        | Music album (CD)                                                                                                                              | ltg                     | 2015 |

Table 24. Audiovisual publications (2010-2015)

<sup>1</sup> Due to space considerations, the language name abbreviations of the ISO 639-3 standard are used: bel – Belarusian, deu – German, eng – English, fra – French, lvs – Latvian, lit – Lithuanian, ltg – Latgalian, rus – Russian, yid – Yiddish.



A large, light gray, stylized number '7' that serves as a background element for the title. It has a thick horizontal top bar and a diagonal stem that tapers slightly towards the bottom.

# **THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIVONIAN LANGUAGE**

(Valts Ernštreits)

**T**he years 2010-15 have been one of the most intensive and fruitful spans of time in the modern history of the Livonian language, and certainly since the restoration of Latvia's independence. It has been rich in activities, events, and publications; many important studies have been initiated and advanced. During this same period, the Salaca Livonian dialect appeared in use again, and, at the same time, the name of the Livonian people and the words of their language have sounded across Latvia and the world, with interest in the Livonians continuing to grow both within the territory they historically inhabit as well as in Latvia as a whole.

However, this period will also enter history as the first time since almost the very beginning of Latvia's restored independence when no government action plans or support mechanisms exist in the law for safeguarding the status of the Livonian language or culture. Likewise, during this time period, a number of Livonian speakers, popularizers, and researchers have passed away. The most significant research into and development of Livonian is currently being carried out in Estonia (at the University of Tartu). Still, the development of Livonian has not stopped and it is possible to speak of the future of Livonian with optimism.

### 7.1. Popularizing the Livonian language

**2011 –  
The International Year  
of Livonian Language  
and Culture**

The period of time discussed in this chapter began with its most significant event, The International Year of Livonian Language and Culture (Starptautiskais lībiešu valodas un kultūras gads) – the year 2011 – which consisted of a collection of events devoted to Livonian language and culture (the program of events is available at: <http://www.livones.net/norises/2011/?raksts=8544>). This year was announced and organized by the Livonian community organization Līvõ kultūr sidām in cooperation with the Livonian Friends' Association (Lībiešu draugu biedrība), which put together exhibitions, concerts, readings, and other events throughout 2011 in Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Lithuania, France, Russia, and elsewhere, in order to acquaint the general public with the Livonian people, their language, and also their traditional and modern culture. In addition to these events, a number of publications appeared describing the Livonians and their language, a number of books were published in Livonian, and a number of conferences devoted to topics relating to Livonian were organized in Latvia and Estonia; these included the participation of the presidents of both of these countries (Figure 91). These conferences actually created the concept of a new scientific field – Livonian Studies (livonika, in Latvian) – or a research field devoted to the study of the Livonians, their history, culture, and language. This has resulted in a conference series devoted to this new field.



Figure 91. Latvian President Andris Bērziņš speaks at the conference Livonica I. The Livonians: Language, History, and Culture (Livonica I. Lībieši: valoda, vēsture un kultūra) on November 4, 2011. Photo: Latvijas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja (Office of the President of Latvia).

The International Year of Livonian Language and Culture noticeably invigorated discussion of Livonian-related questions both within Latvia and abroad. The visits of the presidents of Latvia and Estonia to the Livonian coast can be counted among the indirect results of this, with the Estonian president's visit coming the following year, in 2012 (Figure 92). Other noteworthy achievements to mention include the fact that the incorporation of Livonian language elements into the Song and Dance Festival in Latvia has become practically a tradition, and also the occurrence of many other events which are meaningful from the perspective of the popularization of the Livonians and the Livonian language.

As part of the International Year of Livonian Language and Culture, another tradition was also begun, namely, Livonian Culture Days (Lībiešu kultūras dienas), which are organized by the Livonian community organization Rānda in Ventspils. Traditionally taking place in the middle of September, the Livonian Culture Days have been held each year (with the exception of 2015). The Culture Days' program (Figure 93) has included various concerts, events highlighting modern Livonian culture (poetry readings, exhibitions, etc.), presentations discussing new publications, and so on. Since 2011, the annual Livonian Studies conference has also taken place as part of the Livonian Culture Days (the 2015 conference took place in Riga marking the fifth successive year that this conference had been organized).

**Livonian Culture Days in Ventspils**



Figure 92. Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Latvian President Andris Bērziņš at the Livonian Hall in Mazirbe during their visit to the Livonian Coast on June 7, 2012. Photo: Latvijas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja (Office of the President of Latvia)



## Līvõ kultūr pāvad Vāntas



|                                             |                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>13. septembrī</b><br><b>plkst. 17.00</b> | <b>Baibas Dambergas grafikas izstādes „Ikš Bārban” atklāšana</b><br>Piejūras brīvdabas muzeja Lielirbes lūgšanu namā             |
| <b>14. septembrī</b><br><b>plkst. 11.00</b> | <b>Starptautiskā zinātniskā konference Livonica III „Lībieši: valoda, vēsture un kultūra”</b><br>Ventspils Livonijas ordeņa pili |
| <b>14. septembrī</b><br><b>plkst. 17.00</b> | <b>Lībiešu kolektīvu sadziedāšanās – “Līvōd vešprāiga”</b><br>Ventspils Kultūras centrā                                          |

**Rīkotāji:**  
 Nodibinājums „Ventspils Lībiešu apvienība „Rānda””  


**Līvu Savienības**  
 Ventspils nodaļa  


**Atbalstītāji:**  


Ventspils pilsētas dome  


Lībiešu kultūras centrs  


Figure 93. The Program of the Livonian Culture Days (Lībiešu kultūras dienas) in Ventspils in 2013.

During the last two years, the Livonian Culture Days in Ventspils have been complemented by Kindred People's Day (Radu tautu diena, in Latvian), which is a celebration of unity among nations speaking Finno-Ugrian languages. It takes place in early October, and features events organized by the Livonian community organization Līvōd Īt in Rīga.

Likewise, since the end of 2014, a Livonian day has been organized in Rīga twice monthly. Its participants are given examples of traditional culture, food, and other elements of Livonian life. In 2015, the Livonian day events were included within the program of the Rīga City Festival. This offered participants a chance to attend a Livonian music concert and introduced them to Livonian culture, traditions, and language.

Along with Livonian community organizations, the Latvian Language Agency (Latviešu valodas aģentūra – LVA) has also made a contribution to the popularization of the Livonian language. The Agency has regularly included several events devoted to Livonian in its program for the European Day of Language and has actively involved itself in the organizing and support of various activities connected with the Livonian language. In addition, the Agency actively participated in the events of the International Year of Livonian Language and Culture.

Over the last five years, a new trend has emerged: websites and social media are being used ever more actively for the purpose of popularizing the Livonians and the Livonian language and for sharing related information. The web portal Livones has existed since 2006. In 2012, it changed its web address and can now be found at [www.livones.net](http://www.livones.net). Along with this change, the portal also updated its design and its newer posts appear in not only Latvian, English, and Livonian, but also in Estonian and Finnish. Additionally, the contents of the portal have been supplemented with a section called “The Livonians in 44 Answers”, which is the electronic version of a publication (discussed further on in this article) produced as part of the International Year of Livonian Language and Culture and gives answers to the most frequently asked questions about the Livonians and their language.

Groups or pages devoted to the Livonians and the Livonian language continue to be organized on social networks, for example, on the Latvian social network Draugiem.lv (Līvōmō – <https://www.draugiem.lv/group/16003239/livom/>), on Twitter (Līvu fonds – <https://twitter.com/Livufonds>), Facebook (the choir – Līvlist <https://www.facebook.com/liivlist/>, the Livonian center – Kūolka <https://www.facebook.com/K%C5%ABolka-L%C4%ABvu-centrs-690081924460215/>, Līvi . Līvs . Līvlist, Līvu diena. Līvōd pāva. – <https://www.facebook.com/livudiena/>), and others.

When it comes to popularizing the Livonian language, the most important such group is Līvō Kēļ (<https://www.facebook.com/livuval/>) on Facebook, which started up in 2015. This group, which has more than 700 members, posts a word of the day, which is supplemented by a relevant photo and a reference to related information in the online version of the Livonian-Estonian-Latvian Dictionary. Recently, content has also been complemented with Livonian phrases useful in everyday life, posted along with illustrations and accompanying explanations

describing their usage. Additional audio materials are published separately on the group's YouTube channel Lindloul (<https://www.youtube.com/user/lindloul>). Līvõ Kēļ is the first direct exposure for many Facebook users to the Livonian language. At the same time, the regularly published information helps maintain the community's contact with the Livonian language and functions as the starting point for further Livonian language learning. This group also helps to attract new people interested in Livonian, as the posts on the group are regularly shared by group members on their own profiles, thus reaching a new audience that has often had no contact with the Livonians in the past.

## 7.2. The Livonian language and the Latvian state

### The position of Livonian language and culture in Latvia

Despite the fact that in the past five years there have been wide-ranging and diverse events devoted to popularizing the Livonians and the Livonian language, their combined effect, while clearly noticeable in Latvian society, has ultimately not been effective enough. This is evidenced by the fact that within the Latvian government there is still insufficient understanding regarding the role of the Livonian language and culture in Latvia's cultural space.

Within the Latvian government, Livonian culture and language are still generally viewed as something disconnected and removed from the rest of Latvia's culture. This type of attitude is illustrated, for example, by Guidelines for Cultural Policy. 2014-2020 Creative Latvia (Kultūrpolitikas pamatnostādnes 2014.–2020. gadam "Radošā Latvija") (<http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/documents/4877>) where the Livonians are mentioned only in one point: "2.2.2. To preserve the uniqueness of the historical cultural space (the Suiti, Livonians, and others)". In the case of the Livonians, this is a very narrow formulation oriented towards cultural displays on a local level, and one which does not take into account the fact that the Livonians as well as Livonian-related sources are scattered across a wider location. It also does not consider the comprehensive way in which Livonian language and culture are integrated into the Latvian language and the culture of Latvia as a whole. This impression is strengthened by the grouping of the Livonians together with the Suiti, who really do live in a well-defined territory with a particular cultural space.

The Livonians' role, at least on the national level, should definitely not be marginalized. Unfortunately, this kind of marginalization is continuing and it is specifically this marginalization, rather than the absence of documents detailing the development of government policy with respect to the Livonians, that is one of the most fundamental obstacles to the successful maintenance and – most importantly – further development of Livonian language and culture. Fortunately, at the root of this kind of illogical action is a lack of understanding, and often even a lack of basic knowledge, rather than any malice – and there also are positive exceptions that can be juxtaposed.

For example, over the last five years, the Latvian Language Agency (LVA) has very actively engaged with questions relating to the maintenance and development of the Livonian language. This is not, however, among the Agency's responsibilities. Thanks to the understanding of LVA officials regarding the body of questions relating to the Livonian language and the guarantees given to the Livonian language by the Latvian State Language Law, the LVA has found ways to support projects relating to the maintenance, development, and even – within reason – the popularization of Livonian within the parameters outlined by the State Language Law. The results of this work can be clearly seen, for example, in the final report of the government-supported long-term special purpose program The Livonians in Latvia (Lībieši Latvijā) in 2012, where the support of the LVA for Livonian language maintenance and development forms a significant part of all projects implemented with government support. However, it is paradoxical that the LVA, which, is currently the sole government institution systematically working with questions relating to Livonian, does this work utilizing its existing budget funds and does not receive any additional funds from the national budget designated for working with these questions. This is despite the fact that such support should be automatic.

LVA support

However, the LVA's work cannot make up for the lack of government policy mechanisms – and this has been the situation since the end of the government-supported long-term special purpose program The Livonians in Latvia (Lībieši Latvijā) in 2012. Along with questions pertaining to language, there exist a string of other questions relevant to the Livonians. These are connected, for example, with the preservation of traditional culture and the continuing development of modern culture. These domains have been cast adrift for the time being and responsibility for them has been completely placed on Livonian community organizations, which are certainly very active, but also very limited in terms of their human and material resources. They are not able to fully implement various projects or find funding for them, especially in situations where those responsible for making decisions about the funding of such projects may not always have an understanding of Livonian-related issues and their significance.

The lack of unified policy

Fundamentally, with respect to the Livonian language and the Livonians themselves, at the national government level there is now a vacuum not only in terms of mechanisms for implementing government policy, but also in the circulation of information. Currently, there is no institution possessing clear knowledge of the real situation in areas important to the Livonians, nor is there an understanding of what has already been done, current needs, plans, and their implementation. In addition, it can be seen that government institutions have difficulty in formulating which departments are responsible for issues connected with the Livonians. This situation could begin to be resolved by establishing a contact group between Livonian community organizations, research centers, and local governments and national institutions such as the Ministry of Culture (Kultūras ministrija), the Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un

zinātnes ministrija), the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija), and others. This type of contact group would guarantee at least the circulation of information and a minimum degree of awareness at the level of the national government. On the basis of the results such a group produced, future national policy relating to Livonian issues could be planned by finding the most suitable possibilities for the needs and implementation of projects relating to Livonian language and culture.

### 7.3. Language use in the linguistic environment

#### The Livonian language environment

One of the areas where coordination and government support would be very welcome is the linguistic landscape in which Livonian language use occurs. Thanks to the overall increase in understanding concerning the Livonians, the Livonian language and its potential role in the national economy, especially in tourism, the situation has markedly improved in the last five years.

For example, in Kolka Parish, signs have been put up in many places indicating directions to objects of local interest ("sea", "parking lot", etc. (see <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10208031174683029&set=a.10208024595678558.1073741831.1408656537&type=3&theater>)) with the information appearing in Livonian alongside Latvian. Therefore, individuals who arrive in villages on the northwestern coast of Courland, which have been historically inhabited by Livonians, can become acquainted not only with the nature, history, and points of interest in the area, but also come into contact (often for the first time) with the Livonian language. The use of Livonian in this way also helps distinguish this

region in terms of its cultural and historical uniqueness, thereby also increasing its economic competitiveness.

Some elements of Livonian are also used on the Kolka Parish homepage and in other informative materials.



Figure 94. A direction sign in Košrags. Photo: Kerttu Kibbermann

However, the level of Livonian language use in northern Courland should be quite a bit broader. The State Language Law, which came into force in 1999, states (in Article 18, Point 4) that “Place names [along with] the names of government institutions, community organizations, businesses (companies) on the Livonian Coast as well as the names of events taking place in this region are also to be established and used in the Livonian language.” In this way, the law defines a singular exception in the entire territory of Latvia<sup>1</sup>, i.e., that another language can be used alongside Latvian in the names given for places and government institutions. Unfortunately, this unique exception for Livonian has, in fact, not been sufficiently utilized and this is due primarily to an insufficient degree of awareness of this law and a lack of coordination.

One example here is the Ventspils-Kolka highway, which was modernized and paved in 2011. In the course of the reconstruction work, road signs were placed along the highway and also at the turnoffs towards each Livonian village giving, for the first time ever, the names of the villages and some other information. Sadly, though, Livonian is not used on any of these. In 2016 new laws pertaining to roadways came into effect and these laws specify new parameters for signs near populated areas, so at least the signs near the villages will end up being changed over time. One hopes that the new road signs will for the first time in Latvia's history also include the Livonian text required by the State Language Law. Similarly, it would be a positive development to utilize Livonian in the names and information materials of the government agencies in Dundaga, Tārgale, and Roja Parishes, at least within the territory located on the Livonian Coast.

The use of Livonian in the work of community organizations and local businesspeople could be quite a bit broader. Livonian community organizations have traditionally tried to use elements of Livonian in at least the names of events they have organized and in information materials (for example, the annual Livonian Festival, the program of the Ventspils Livonian Culture Days, etc.). However, in everyday work and information available online, Livonian has been used rather infrequently.

A similar situation exists for private business. Many tourism-related businesses offering trips in the region historically inhabited by the Livonians mention the Livonians in their informational materials, but they do this fairly passively with elements in Livonian itself hardly appearing at all (<http://www.kolka.info/lv>, <http://www.piza.lv>, <http://pitagi.lv>). SIA “Kolkasrags” is the only business that uses Livonian fairly actively in its communications, visual information, and also online. This also is the only business that, since 2009, has offered a Livonian language version of its website (<http://www.kolkasrags.lv/li>). It is fairly sparse, but, all the same, this kind of action has real value.

<sup>1</sup> This is also specified in the Cabinet of Ministers' Place Name Information Regulations. See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=243610>.

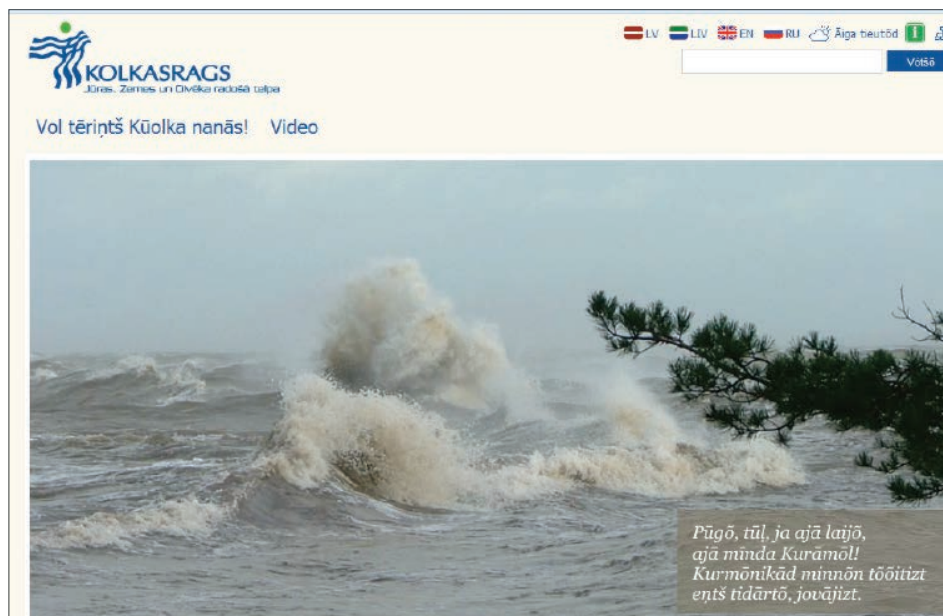


Figure 95. The Livonian language version of the SIA “Kolkasrags” website. Screen shot of [www.kolkasrags.lv/li](http://www.kolkasrags.lv/li)

It is peculiar that Livonian is not used in any of the informational materials available at tourist information centers within the territory historically inhabited by the Livonians (<http://www.visitsalacgriva.lv/lv>, <http://www.aloja.lv/turisms>, <http://www.turaida-muzejs.lv>, and others). The closest thing to the use of Livonian language in this context is that Kolka Parish Council places a regularly updated Livonian “word of the day” on its website and the Dundaga Municipality Tourist Information Center offers visitors the opportunity to view its website in the Dundaga dialect of Latvian (<http://visit.dundaga.lv/dun/destinations/libiesu-krasts>) – but this, of course, would not be technically correct to call an example of Livonian language use.

#### Factors hindering the use of Livonian in the linguistic environment

It can be concluded that the use of Livonian in the linguistic landscape is being halted by several contributing factors. Primarily, it is due to a lack of information concerning the possibilities for utilizing Livonian and also difficulty in finding elements of Livonian to use. Another factor is the lack of sufficient initiative in using Livonian elements, which is caused by the functional approach to Livonian, i.e., the need for the use of the language is seen only in terms of the number of potential users of such materials, and does not consider more broadly the accompanying value of these language elements, their effect on encouraging cultural tourism, and the perspectives for increasing the number of potential language users in the future. An additional problem also exists in finding financial support for the preparation of materials in Livonian and even if such support is found, there then is the difficulty of hiring individuals able to prepare such materials.

Therefore, it is clear that Livonian would be used much more if institutional and advisory support for utilizing Livonian were available to national and local government institutions, community organizations, and businesses – for example, in preparing texts and translating these into Livonian. This surely be a powerful motivation for a considerably more active use of Livonian.

## 7.4. Language acquisition and dynamics

The most complex situation still exists in the realm of Livonian language acquisition. Livonian is in an unusual situation. The geographical area of people interested in it is limited and yet also scattered, not only within Latvia, but also beyond its borders. This means that it is difficult to form language learning groups of adequate size whose participants also possess knowledge of Livonian at a similar level. For this reason, the level of Livonian language classes, even if it is possible to organize them despite the difficulties involved with logistics and financial support, will always settle at the lowest proficiency level within the group, which typically means studying language basics. As individuals who already possess knowledge of Livonian usually become involved in such groups, this type of language activity can offer them nothing aside from repeating language basics and a chance to socialize with other class participants. Therefore, the results of such language acquisition activities are largely symbolic.

The second biggest problem is access to Livonian language teachers. The number of Livonian language teachers is very small, especially when it comes to organizing classes focusing on more advanced language study. In addition, not infrequently teachers and potential language course participants are located in different places, which means that it is necessary to transport teachers for such courses from other locations. An example of such a situation can be found in the Livonian language courses financed by Ventspils City Council in 2013/2014, where a teacher would travel twice a month from Rīga (*Vīgerte 2014*).

Consequently, the design of Livonian language courses along with other factors connected with organization and content have to be taken into account, as do the fairly complicated logistics and associated expenses, which often add unnecessarily to the cost of the language learning process.

In order to resolve the problems associated with Livonian language instruction, there are two main solutions possible in this type of situation: (1) improve the possibilities for Livonian language acquisition through self-study or through distance learning and (2) intensify Livonian language acquisition by bringing together in intensive language courses Livonian language teachers and those interested in studying Livonian, but who are often spread out geographically.

Opportunities for self-study and distance learning have further developed markedly in recent years with the publication of the *Livonian Language Dictionary* in 2012 and the appearance of its online version (see further on in this arti-

Problems in Livonian  
language acquisition

Possibilities for improving  
the effectiveness of  
language acquisition

cle). As the dictionary also includes information on grammar and the fundamental principles of the Livonian language, it too can be used for learning the basics of the Livonian language. In addition, the Livonian primer prepared by Livonian intellectual Kārlis Stalte in the late 1930s was published in 2011 (Figure 96). With the translation of its contents into Latvian and Estonian, it can be used as a practical learning tool for studying Livonian.



Figure 96. The Livonian primer prepared by Kārlis Stalte: *Jelzi sōnā. Ābēd ja īrgandōks lugdōbrōntōz* (*The Living Word. A Primer and Beginning Reading Book.*) (Publishers: The Mother Tongue Society of Estonian and the Livonian Cultural Center, Riga, 2011).

Taking into account the complex grammar of Livonian, it is very important to develop special, preferably interactive, Livonian language learning materials suitable for different proficiency levels, which would ensure the possibility for more complete independent language acquisition. Likewise, utilizing the opportunities provided by modern technology in developing online distance learning programs would allow teachers to work with students regardless of their location. At the moment, solutions like these do not exist for Livonian, though work has been done on developing such programs within different scientific projects at both the University of Tartu and the University of Helsinki (see further on in this article).

#### The Livonian Children's Camp "Mierlinkizt"

With respect to intensive Livonian language study, two successful examples can be mentioned. Since as early as 1992, the Livonian children's camp Mierlinkizt has taken place every summer. Children from all around Latvia learn the basics of the Livonian language at the camp, which lasts for several weeks. Even if it is not possible to learn a great deal of Livonian during such a short time and even if a majority of the camp participants do not come into contact with Livonian in the interim, this camp is the first exposure for a large number of the camp participants to Livonian (which for many of them is their family's heritage language) and can potentially prompt them to further efforts in studying Livonian.



Figure 97. The participants of the Livonian children's summer camp Mierlinkizt in 2015. Photo: Ieva Zdanovska

Another example is the Livonian Summer University, which took place in Košrags, on the Livonian Coast, in 2013 (Figure 98). At the Summer University, researchers and students of Finno-Ugric linguistics from six different countries spent one week learning the fundamentals of Livonian language, history, and culture, while also familiarizing themselves with the region in northern Courland historically inhabited by the Livonians. The Summer University was part of a study program at the University of Tartu and the students participating in it received ECTS credits.

Even though it is possible to study Livonian at several institutions of higher learning (the University of Tartu, the University of Helsinki, and the University of Latvia), this type of summer university format allows individuals from other educational institutions, where Livonian language study is not available, to learn about the Livonians and the Livonian language as well as to study Livonian at a deeper level and expand upon the knowledge they have already gained at their own educational institutions. It also allows students to become acquainted with Livonian culture and lifeways in the territory historically inhabited by the Livonian people – their fishing villages in northern Courland.

#### The Livonian Summer University



Figure 98. The teachers and students of the Livonian Summer University by Lāži Oak in Vaide. Photo: Gunta Kļava

**The lack of study materials and methodological resources**

Of course, these types of intensive language learning activities have their downsides. In the case of the Livonians, these types of intensive courses are expensive due to the logistical and accommodation costs involved. Additionally, these types of intensive study programs are not that suited to individuals with busy schedules who require more planning to ensure that their available free time matches the schedule of the courses.

An additional problem for learning Livonian is the lack of appropriate learning materials. As mentioned earlier, several new tools to help with language learning have appeared within the last five years: a dictionary and a primer. K. Boiko's Livonian language course book *Līvõ kēļ. Piški optõbrõtõz. Libiešu valoda. Mazā mēcibu grāmata* (*The Livonian Language. A short textbook.*), published in 2000, continues to be used for language learning. However, it only ensures Livonian language acquisition at a basic level and it is also not well-suited to those without a preexisting knowledge of linguistics. The target audience of this course book were the undergraduate students of the Finno-Ugric Studies program at the University of Latvia. As a result, language learning materials are largely prepared by Livonian language teachers themselves.

Special methodological and scientific teaching resources are also necessary for Livonian language teachers, as information concerning Livonian grammar is often difficult to find or is published in other languages. As a result, it is difficult for teachers to find answers to the many questions that arise while studying Livonian, which makes the language learning process considerably more difficult. However, currently a Livonian text corpus intended for pedagogical use is being prepared and work is also being done on preparing a handbook of Livonian grammar (see further on in this article), which, once completed, will certainly simplify the work of both teachers and students, also in Latvia.

With respect to the dynamics of language use in the last five years, it can be said that the total number of Livonian speakers has not noticeably changed. A small increase in number is only visible in the group composed of those who have learned some Livonian language basics. The reason for this is the annual Livonian children's summer camp, the Livonian Summer University, the continuing teaching of Livonian at institutions of higher learning, a selection of Livonian language courses as well as the ever-increasing amount of Livonian language materials online. These have promoted the acquisition of basic knowledge of Livonian and increased interest in Livonian in general.

Overall, it can be concluded that in order to resolve the problems associated with teaching Livonian, coordinated planned action and a broad range of solutions and activities is necessary, some of which are already being implemented. The greatest hindrance to securing Livonian language acquisition continues to be a lack of resources – this includes teachers, researchers, and financial support.

## **7.5. Language research, publications, and the development of language resources**

There has been much active work recently in the field of Livonian language research. During this time, the foundations have been laid for future studies of far greater depth.

The largest and most meaningful work created during this period is the *Livonian-Estonian-Latvian Dictionary* published in 2012 (Viitso, Ernštreits 2012), which is the result of a nearly 40-year-long process of documenting Livonian lexical items (Figure 99). This publication is especially noteworthy in that it reflects contemporary Livonian, and also that the lexical data are written in the modern Livonian orthography. The dictionary also includes supplementary information, such as notes on pronunciation, a short introduction to Livonian grammar, and a description of conjugation and declension types. All of these qualities make it a suitable tool not only for further research into Livonian, but also as a means for language acquisition. In keeping with contemporary trends, this dictionary is available not only on paper, but also online (<http://www.murre.ut.ee/liivi>).

**The Livonian-Estonian-Latvian Dictionary**



Figure 99. The Livonian-Estonian-Latvian Dictionary and the article collection *Lībieši. Vēsture, valoda un kultūra* (The Livonians: History, Language, and Culture).

#### The design of the electronic dictionary and corpus

This project is currently being expanded upon at the University of Tartu where on the basis of this dictionary, a new, expanded version is being prepared. This new version will include the complete Livonian conjugation and declension paradigms and will also be connected with the Livonian written language corpus. This emerging corpus will be useable for not only more detailed studies into Livonian, but also in everyday life for studying Livonian. At the same time, on the basis of the dictionary, the corpus, and earlier Livonian language studies, there is a plan to prepare a grammar of Modern Livonian and a handbook of Livonian by 2018. This will be a major aid for Livonian language teachers and students alike.

#### Other tools

New tools intended to assist with the acquisition and use of Livonian are also being designed in Finland where through a cooperation between the University of Helsinki and the University of Tromsø, utilizing the materials used for the Livonian-Estonian-Latvian Dictionary, new spell check, automatic translation, and morphological analysis tools are being developed. As part of this project, the already functioning versions of these programs are available for use with the open access program *Open Office* as well as with web browsers. Recently, work has also begun on developing a Livonian keyboard for mobile devices as well as Livonian language tools for other such devices necessary for modern life.



Figure 100. The electronic version of the Livonian-Estonian-Latvian Dictionary, screenshot of <http://www.murre.ut.ee/liivi>

*The Livonians: History, Language, and Culture* (Lībieši: Vēsture, valoda un kultūra) (Figure 99) is a significant study on the Livonians in general and was published in Estonian in 2011 and in Latvian in 2013. A section of this book is devoted specifically to the Livonian language, its contacts, borrowings, and grammar. Especially important in this collection is the description of the basic characteristics of Livonian.

The aforementioned publications were published in connection with the International Year of Livonian Culture and Language; however, other studies of Livonian have continued to appear in addition to these.

For example, the journal ESUKA, which focuses on the Finno-Ugrian languages, published a special issue on the Livonian language in 2014, which also became the first collection of articles devoted to Livonian published in English. This collection contains various materials concerning the history of the Livonian language, its grammar, and current directions in research into Livonian (ESUKA 2014). It should be noted that the next issue devoted to the Livonians in this series was published in 2016.

Along with these publications, work has continued on many other studies. The most significant current areas of research include Livonian and Latvian language contacts, the Salaca dialect of Livonian, the modern-day morphology of

**The Livonians: History, Language, and Culture**

**The contribution of scientists to the study of Livonian**

Livonian. Here it should also be mentioned that University of Tartu researchers Tuuli Tuisk and Miina Norvik defended doctoral dissertations they had written on Livonian (Tuisk on phonetics, Norvik on syntax). Syntax is especially important as it is one of the least studied areas of Livonian.

The last five years have also been significant in that many researchers have been recognized for their contribution to science. Karl Pajusalu was elected an academic of the Estonian Academy of Sciences and also an external member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences (LAS); Eberhard Winkler was elected an academic of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and an external member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences; Renāte Blumberga was elected an external member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences and also received the Baltic Assembly's Science Prize; Tiit-Rein Viitso received Estonia's highest prize in the field of language research – the Wiedemann Prize; and Valts Ernštreits received Estonia's Kindred People's Program Prize in the field of science.

### Other Publications

#### The Livonians in 44 answers

Between 2011 and 2015, along with scientific studies, a rich collection of many other works has been added to the bibliography of publications appearing on topics related to the Livonians. Ignoring its relatively limited scope, one of the most important and popular publications to appear in recent times is *Lībieši 44 atbildēs* (*The Livonians in 44 Answers*) (prepared by: Līvõ Kultūr Sidām, publisher: Latviešu valodas aģentūra, 2011). This thin, little book (Figure 101) contains basic information about the Livonians along with answers to the 44 most common questions asked about them. The initial motivation for this book was to offer basic information about the Livonians and the Livonian language to teachers, so that they could include this information in their lessons. This publication turned out to be so successful that its first run had been almost entirely purchased before the book's official unveiling. This book is now in its second edition and has been translated into English. The text of the booklet is also available online.

A similar publication, which was also very popular, appeared in Estonia. This was the special issue of the periodical *Eesti Loodus* (*Estonian Nature*) devoted exclusively to the Livonians. In this issue, readers were acquainted with the Livonian language, the Livonians themselves as well as the territories they have historically inhabited.

#### Let's limit ourselves to the maximum

Speaking of publications related to the Livonian language, we should also mention a somewhat unique publication marking the 20th anniversary of the Livonian community organization Līvõ kultūr sidām – Aprobežosimies ar maksimumu (*Let's Limit Ourselves to the Maximum*) (Rīga: Līvõ Kultūr Sidām, 2014). This book based on excerpts from various earlier published works devoted to modern Livonian history, including the work Līvõ Kultūr Sidām has done in the fields of language maintenance, preservation, and popularization. In this way, this book documents the newest developments in the field of Livonian.



Figure 101. The booklet *Lībieši 44 atbildēs* (*The Livonians in 44 Answers*) and the book *Aprobežosimies ar maksimumu* (*Let's Limit Ourselves to the Maximum*)

During the period discussed above, several works have been published devoted to the Livonian language with the most important of which doubtlessly being Kārlis Stalte's Livonian primer *Jelzi sōnā. Ābēd ja īrgandōks lugdōbrōntōz* (*The Living Word. A Primer and Beginning Reading Book.*) (Figure 96) written in the late 1930s. This book is a collection of Kārlis Stalte's original poems and stories, which can surely be regarded as one of the most excellent examples of Livonian literature. Its high quality language and translations into Estonian and Latvian, which were published as a separate booklet, make this publication a good tool to help with Livonian language acquisition. It is especially noteworthy that this book is the first book published exclusively in Livonian since World War II.

Two bilingual poetry anthologies were also published during the International Year of Livonian Language and Culture (Figure 102). The first of these was the poetry anthology *Kā iznirst lībieši* (*How the Livonians Emerge*) (Rīga: *Līvō kultūr sidām*, 2011), which contains the work of poets from various nations devoted to the Livonians and also the work of four Livonian poets written in Livonian and Latvian. This book was nominated for the Culture Award of the Latvian daily newspaper *Diena*. The second book is a Livonian poetry anthology in Livonian and Estonian *Līvō lüolkub. Ma akub sīnda vizzō, tūrska!* (*A Livonian Poetry Anthology. I'm Craftier than you are, Cod!*) (Tartu: Tartu Ülikool, 2011).

Poetry anthologies



Figure 102. The Poetry anthology *Kui sūolōbōd līvlizt/Kā iznirst lībieši* (How the Livonians Emerge) and the Salaca Livonian poetry collection by Ķempi Kārl *Salats joug kolm aġa* (The Three Shores of the Salaca).

### Poetry in Salaca Livonian

Possibly the most surprising event is the return into use of the Salaca<sup>2</sup> dialect of Livonian. This occurred thanks to poet, Ķempi Kārl who writes in Salaca Livonian and whose book *Salats joug kolm aġa* (The Three Shores of the Salaca. Met-sepole: *Libiešu draugu biedrība*, 2013) became the first book in Salaca Livonian in the entire history of the existence of the Livonian people (Figure 102). Along with the original poems in Salaca Livonian, this book contains translations into Estonian and Latvian. This first book by Ķempi Kārl has already been followed by a second volume *Toini sina = Teine sina* (Another you) (2013) and the poet continues to write actively. The newest poems by Ķempi Kārl have been published on the web portal *Livones* (<http://www.livones.net/norises/2015/?raksts=8888>). It should be noted that not only has Ķempi Kārl returned Salaca Livonian, the last known speakers of which lived in the middle of the 19th Century, to active use, but that he has also created a Salaca Livonian written language based on the orthography of literary Livonian.

<sup>2</sup> The Salaca dialect was the last Livonian dialect still spoken on the eastern coast of the Gulf of Rīga in northern Vidzeme near the Salaca River and the town of Svētdciems. This dialect was documented in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, but later on no other speakers of it were found by linguists.

## 7.6. Problems and future opportunities

Looking back at the development of Livonian during the last few years, it can be concluded that it has proceeded successfully. It could even be said to have done so very well. Of course, it is true that the deciding factor in this process has been precisely the active work of community organizations in cooperation with institutions outside of Latvia along with financial support from various sources outside of Latvia (scientific grants, support from international and foreign project competitions, and so on), which, in fact, exceed by several times the total funding received from various Latvian government institutions.

Government agencies and organizations have taken an active involvement in supporting events connected with the Livonian language. However, the lack of coordination and government planning is glaring, as is the lack of cooperation between institutions and the disorganization in terms of dividing responsibilities and preparing government policy documents in the period since the end of the government program The Livonians in Latvia (Libieši Latvijā) in 2012.

The LVA is without a doubt the most active and systematic government organization involved with Livonian language maintenance and the promotion of its development over the last five years, up to and including the present. Supporting Livonian, however, is not part of its official function and for this reason the LVA does not receive any supplementary funds for this work. The support utilized thus far for various nationally significant and vitally important projects for Livonian has been found through individual initiative or through internal redistribution of existing funding. This kind of situation is not quite appropriate and in the future must certainly be improved by providing a separate budget for the implementation of the government's obligations as described in Article 4 of the State Language Law.

Considering the work of Livonian community organizations in the area of Livonian language maintenance and support, it can be concluded that this work is limited by a number of factors, the most significant being a lack of resources. There are few Livonians, and there are even fewer Livonians who are active in their community and are ready to work with issues important to the Livonian community. At the same time, knowledgeable Livonian language professionals can be counted on the fingers of both hands.

Taking into account the fact that Livonian community organizations do not receive regular funding and that they work based on the project principle, often vitally important projects cannot be implemented simply because community organizations are not able to prepare the necessary documentation for project competitions and ensure the submission of project reports and evidence of completed work – especially for financial instruments with very strict criteria – due to a lack of professionals. Likewise, such projects are often not submitted, because there is a lack of belief that the funding will actually be received, and therefore the preparation of documentation for a project is seen as a waste of

Support from abroad

The role and opportunity of community organizations

already scarce resources. At the same time, in project competitions, applications for funding of Livonian-related projects are not infrequently denied when those selecting projects for funding do not understand the importance of such projects to the Livonians.

For these reasons, community organizations often implement larger projects by dividing them into microprojects with the organizational work for preparing and implementing these microprojects being done by members of these organizations without compensation and with the use of their own resources. An excellent example is the International Year of Livonian Language and Culture, which, in Latvia, was composed of an enormous number of various microprojects. Several events during this year were cancelled, as the organizers were not able to pay for travel costs.

As a result, a paradoxical situation is emerging where government functions with respect to Livonian issues, especially after the end of the government-supported long-term special purpose program The Livonians in Latvia (*Lībieši Latvijā*) in 2012, for the most part are the responsibility of community organizations, though funding does not exist for these organizations to carry out their necessary role in this capacity. If this situation does not change, national policy with respect to Livonian issues will in the future mostly be reliant on Livonian enthusiasm, which, though great, is not boundless. A positive sign is that the new *Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015-2020 (Valsts valodas politikas pamatnostādnes 2015.-2020. gadam)* (2014) specify support for the development of the Livonian language. One can hope at least that funding will be provided for implementing the tasks outlined in this document.

However, the situation of the Livonians in general and in the next two years, thanks to the LVA, the Science and Education Ministry of the Republic of Estonia, the Estonian Kindred People's Program, and the Finnish Kone Foundation, can be considered good. New studies, which can be used for practical purposes, are being produced and their first results will be apparent in 2016.

As mentioned above, the worst situation is currently in Livonian language acquisition and the developing of language learning materials. Solutions will need to be found for resolving these problems in the near future. Modern-day and future technologies can certainly be used here, such as online tools for language learning and use and automatic translation programs. As already mentioned, work is currently underway to develop these types of tools for Livonian.

At the same time, it is important to involve the Livonians and those interested in Livonian into this work. In the 21st century, with the appearance of the internet and social networks, with the appearance of Skype and the ability to record sound with our computers, and to record videos and publish them online, everyone has the ability to participate in the preservation and development of Livonian. One good example already exists – the Facebook group *Līvõ kēļ*. It only remains for others to follow this example.

Emphasis on Livonian  
language acquisition

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Precisely these new technologies and the possibilities they offer, used wisely, can solve many of the problems that the Livonian language faces with respect to popularization, development, and learning. Therefore, every Livonian, every individual interested in Livonian, must do everything they can in order to fully take advantage of this technology as much as possible, and to help the Livonian language be a step ahead of the others.





**THE MOST  
SIGNIFICANT  
LANGUAGE  
POLICY EVENTS AS  
REFLECTED IN THE  
MASS MEDIA**

(Dite Liepa)

## The role of the mass media

The events most  
discussed in the mass  
media relating  
to language policy

This chapter summarizes the most important events associated with language policy and language development processes that were reported in the mass media and which prompted a wide-ranging response from society between 2010 and 2015. “The mass media – on paper and electronically – form an important public (social) segment of sociolinguistic domains in which a decisive struggle of language competition is occurring.” (Druviēte 2008).

Mutual connections and influence between language and society appear in the mass media, especially during periods of sociopolitical and economic upheaval. In this way, with the help of mass media, a metaphorization of the listener’s awareness takes place, which, in turn, prompts this individual to verbal or non-verbal action. However, in any case, this stirs society’s thinking and manipulates its awareness. Society has accepted freedom of speech and expression, understanding that this secures the rights of the individual and that it exists as a prerequisite for the development of society itself. The more democratic and active a society is, the more events, processes, and changes occur within it that must be described and about which society must be informed. Mass media, as the fourth estate, approaches its audience both as citizens as well as consumers in shaping this cultural and political forum.

Regarding language as the property of a people, every individual has a view: the student, the retiree, the employed person, the unemployed person, the foreigner living in Latvia, and the guest in this country. The active involvement of members of society is achieved not only thanks to the opportunities provided by our era to speak publicly, to discuss, to write, to explain, and to convince. A meaningful and noteworthy role in this process has been played by the possibilities for electronic communication offered by technology (e-mail, text messages, blogs, tweets, and so on), the diversity of social networks and the increase in their popularity and use.

Recalling the events of the last five years most connected with language, the event that shocked not only society but the entire country, first and foremost, was the referendum on recognizing Russian as the second official state language. This was a significant question affecting the existence of the Latvian language and people. “February 18, 2012 is a date which the majority of Latvia’s residents would like to forget, as if the danger had passed. However, the referendum itself as well as the events surrounding it show the strength and weakness of the position of Latvian and where the weak spots exist in our language policy and protection of our country’s fundamental values.” (Druviēte 2013, 16).

In addition, the language referendum caused a chain reaction with respect to other questions concerning language policy: the Latvian language proficiency of and use by members of the Saeima (i.e., the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia), the Preamble to the Constitution (Satversme), the use of Latvian by government officials for the purposes of official communication, and so on. Society did not stay quiet, but instead became actively involved in questions relating to language quality and culture: this is evidenced by the discussion concerning the proper

way of writing names in Latvian as well as rules of proper spelling; the quality and degree of proficiency of government officials when making public statements; becoming involved with selecting the word, the “non-word” (“nevārds”), and “noteworthy expression” (“spārnotais teiciens”) of the year along with finding neologisms and new expressions; and, lastly, discussions concerning selecting language as used for visual information and in commercials (Table 25). Therefore, any question associated with Latvian shows that society is not indifferent to language policy, language use, or questions of the quality of language as it is used.

| Year      | Event                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Domain                                     |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 2010      | Language proficiency and use by members of the Saeima: some members elected to the 10th Saeima have insufficient language proficiency to fully perform their duties                                                                                                                         | Latvian language proficiency and use       |
| 2011      | Members of the 11 <sup>th</sup> Saeima giving the oath of office: some members of the Saeima had insufficient language proficiency to be able to correctly give their oath, at the same time members of the Saeima elected from the Latgale electoral district gave their oath in Latgalian | Latvian language proficiency and use       |
| 2011–2012 | The referendum regarding granting Russian status as the second state language                                                                                                                                                                                                               | State language status of Latvian           |
| 2012–2014 | The development and approval of the preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (Satversme)                                                                                                                                                                                      | State language status of Latvian           |
| 2010–2015 | The law pertaining to electronic mass media and changes to this law                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Latvian language use and environment       |
| 2010–2015 | The language chosen by government officials when appearing in the mass media; the use of Latvian in the job market; the use of Latvian and foreign languages by government institutions in communicating with residents                                                                     | Latvian language use and environment       |
| 2010–2015 | The representation of given names and the choice of language in the public domain – mass media, learning materials, commercials, etc.                                                                                                                                                       | Language quality and culture               |
| 2010–2015 | The Latvian language campaign “The Word, Non-Word, and Expression of the Year”                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Language quality and culture               |
| 2015      | The establishment of the Institute for Community Assistants (Sabiedrisko palīgu institūts) at the State Language Center                                                                                                                                                                     | Language quality and culture, language use |

Table 25. The most widely discussed events in the mass media pertaining to language policy (2010–2015). <sup>1</sup>

## 8.1. The language proficiency and language use of members of the Saeima (parliament)

The members of the Saeima (Parliament of the Republic of Latvia), in accordance with the law pertaining to proficiency in the state language for performing certain professional duties and ones associated with particular positions (Cabinet of Minister Regulation No. 733, July 7, 2009), must be able to speak Latvian at

**The language proficiency of members of the Saeima**

<sup>1</sup> Further on in this article, every event mentioned in this table is discussed and its influence on the language situation and implementation of language policy is analyzed.

the highest level. However, in 2010, the question regarding the Latvian language proficiency of members of the Saeima and their ability to perform their duties without knowledge of Latvian, came to the forefront in public discussion. “2010 is the election year for the 10<sup>th</sup> Saeima. On October 2, 2010, the identity will become known of the new “hundred”<sup>2</sup> who will make decisions for our future and that of the country,” is how Sarmīte Feldmane, journalist for the Cēsis newspaper *Druva*, pragmatically and directly referred to the recently elected members of the Saeima on 27.10.2010. The term served by the 10<sup>th</sup> Saeima was not long<sup>3</sup>; however, the language question was topical in this Saeima, as evidenced by the language proficiency of its members. On October 14, 2010, the following news appeared in newspapers and on news portals online: “Of the individuals elected to the 10<sup>th</sup> Saeima, four have stated that they speak the state language [i.e., Latvian] at a medium, satisfactory, or only on a conversational level; however, a much larger number of parliamentarians may have problems with Latvian in their new jobs.” (Kārkliņš 2010). The 2009 local government elections were the first where candidates were not asked to provide a certification of Latvian language proficiency, but were instead only asked to provide a self-assessment of their proficiency level. As citizens from other EU countries could also be elected to the local governments of the territories in which they reside, this created problems with Latvian language proficiency for members of the Saeima as well as city and municipality councils.

“Members of the Saeima must know the state language [i.e., Latvian] at the highest level, because the issues they have to resolve are not insignificant at all – [not] everyday situations where they could manage with only conversational language knowledge. All the documentation is in the state language,” states poet and playwright M. Zālīte. She points out that “the only thing that we as a society can expect from these members of parliament is that that they learn the language and use it. [...] Members of parliament must expect that if they wish to be full-fledged statesmen, then they will have to use the state language” (Kārkliņš 2010).

Special attention was given by the mass media to V. Kravcovs, a member of the 10<sup>th</sup> Saeima elected from the party alliance *Saskaņas centrs* (Harmony Center – SC) from the Kurzeme electoral district. This member of the Saeima read his oath in Latvian from a small piece of paper, avoided any questions in Latvian, admitted that in Liepāja City Council he had worked with the help of a translator, though this, as is known, is not permitted in the Saeima. The question arose: how did a person with such weak knowledge of Latvian become a citizen? This question was investigated by the Security Police; however, they did not find any violations in the course of their investigation. This member of the Saeima had received the necessary number of points on his Latvian language proficiency exam and, as

**How can one fulfil the requirements of being a member of the Saeima without speaking Latvian?**

<sup>2</sup> A reference to there being 100 members in the Saeima, the unicameral parliament of the Republic of Latvia.

<sup>3</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> Saeima was dismissed before the end of its term and a special parliamentary election was called to elect the 11<sup>th</sup> Saeima in 2011.

no obstacles were found to his receiving Latvian citizenship, he had received it as a result of a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers. This member of the Saeima had also realized that his language proficiency was insufficient and, as reported by the *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* (*The Independent Morning News* – NRA), had resolved to hire a private teacher to study Latvian (TVNET 2010). This member of the Saeima was given two months for language study; however, the promise to learn the language was not kept. In the continuing scrutiny of the “Kravcovs question”, both voters and the party that nominated him as a candidate received blame.

Discussions began in the press about expelling Kravcovs from the Saeima; however, the Saeima Legal Committee determined that to expel Kravcovs, the fact of his lack of language proficiency would have to be established. Human rights defenders also became involved. I. Brands-Kehre pointed out that human rights experts would protest against Kravcovs’ expulsion from the Saeima due to a lack of language proficiency, because this is a question pertaining to fundamental democratic values (Brands-Kehre 2011).

“If a nation is sovereign, then it can also elect those who no one likes and it has the right to do this,” Brands-Kehre emphasized, at the same time pointing out that the political party represented by Kravcovs would need to do work to ensure that this kind of situation did not reoccur. “Society needs to be sufficiently conscientious so that next time it does not elect a representative who, by not knowing the state language, cannot fulfil his duties.”

M. Baltiņš, Director of the VVC (Valsts valodas centrs – the State Language Center), also pointed to the responsibility of society in the election process on the *Latvijas Vēstnesis* (*The Messenger of Latvia*) portal *Par likumu un valsti* (*Concerning Law and the State*): “Every voter fundamentally desires that their representative adequately represents the interests of their electorate, not that they just exist mechanically in the city council or Saeima. In selecting future elected representatives, voters should be guided by rational considerations. It is obvious that a lawmaker should be aware of and understand what is being voted on, what is being discussed, what the arguments are. Representatives should be chosen not according to who has the most beautiful hairstyle or demagogic rhetoric, but instead according to their abilities and instincts.” (Juriņa 2011).

After several months of discussions, a decision was made in February 2011: Saeima member Kravcovs would have to learn Latvian within one year. If not, then he would possibly have to resign his elected position due to pressure from his own party, as SC, at least publicly, had stated that he had to speak Latvian at the necessary level. Thus, on July 16, 2012, entrepreneur and now already former Saeima member V. Kravcovs, after two months of intensive preparation, passed his Latvian language exam and received a state language proficiency certificate for the second level of basic proficiency.

The role of society

**The Saeima Rules of Procedure****In what language should a Saeima member's oath be given?**

At the beginning of 2011, the Saeima Rules of Procedure (*Saeimas kārtības rullis*) regarding a Saeima member's expulsion from the Saeima due to poor knowledge of Latvian became topical. The Saeima is permitted to expel a member from its membership if he or she does not speak the state language (i.e., Latvian) to the extent necessary for performing his or her professional duties. This issue became topical following the election of V. Kravcovs (SC) to the Saeima.

**Difficulties for Saeima members in reading their oaths**

On July 23, 2011, voters supported the motion by the President at that time to dismiss the 10<sup>th</sup> Saeima, which had been elected less than a year earlier. The early Saeima elections occurred in Autumn 2011 and the 11<sup>th</sup> Saeima was elected. In the very first Saeima session, attention was directed to a language question – the question of giving the oath in Latvian. As reported by the weekly publication *Ir*, on October 17, 2011, 11<sup>th</sup> Saeima members J. Ādamsons from SC and J. Dombrava from Nacionālā Apvienība (The National Alliance – NA) gave their oaths incorrectly and had to repeat them. Several other members of the Saeima also made mistakes resulting in them having to repeat their oaths a second time.

G. Igaunis and J. Viļums, elected from the Zatlers Reformu partija (Zatlers' Reform Party – ZRP), had to repeat their oaths, because initially they had given them in Latgalian. Saeima Speaker S. Āboltiņa indicated that the oath must be given in the state language, which is the Latvian language. J. Viļums gave his again in Latgalian following S. Āboltiņa's reprimand, but then, repeating it a third time, gave it in the state language (*Ir* 2011).

**Discussions concerning the use of the literary language in the Saeima**

Perhaps due to Saeima Speaker S. Āboltiņa's awkward choice of words ("The oath must be read in the state language!"), a discussion began regarding the role, place, and status of Latvian dialects in society, which in a larger sense is connected with questions relating to the coexistence of the High Latvian (i.e., Latgalian) dialect, the Latgalian written language, and the Latvian literary language. "In Latvia, the state language is Latvian; however, it has several varieties, therefore, Saeima members J. Viļums and G. Igaunis did also use the state language when giving their oaths in Latgalian. In this context and situation, the Saeima speaker needed to indicate that they should speak in the Latvian literary language. Otherwise, a situation emerges where Latvian and Latgalian are placed in opposition, with the latter being marginalized as 'not the state language, but a foreign language'" (Sperga 2011). Those supporting the oath of office being given in Latgalian feel that Latvian language varieties are also dialects, therefore, the oath can be given in Latvian dialects; in addition, "from a linguistic perspective, neither High Latvian, nor any other dialect of Latvian can be treated as a foreign language" (Vītola 2011). At the same time, those representing the opposing view stated that dialects differ from the Latvian literary language and for this reason oaths spoken in this way would not be understandable to everyone. Additionally, the State Language Law is violated, as Article 23 of the law states that official communication in Latvian occurs according to the existing norms of the literary language.

A similar situation was repeated with J. Viļums three years later when, following his election for “Reģionu apvienība” (the Regional Alliance) to the 12<sup>th</sup> Saeima, at its first session he once again gave his oath in Latgalian. In this instance, Viļums pointed out that his oath was not given purely in Latgalian. He had compromised by also using some words in Latvian, so that the oath could be better understood. Saeima member and specialist in literature J. Kursīte-Pakule pointed out that while Latvian has two written traditions – Latvian and Latgalian – it has only one literary spoken form – Latvian. At the same time, other Saeima members disagreed with J. Kursīte-Pakule, stating that Viļums’ text was comprehensible and therefore should be accepted, as his oath had been given in comprehensible Latvian. The Saeima Speaker accepted the commission’s observation and invited Viļums to sign his oath of office without insisting on him repeating his oath in literary Latvian. Thus, for the first time, the oath in the Saeima was given in Latgalian (Lastovskis 2014).

These language questions were the focus of radio and television broadcasts, journalists’ discussions, and conference presentations. On October 25, 2011, the publication *Jurista vārds* (*The Lawyer’s Word*) devoted an issue to this subject and collected opinions from linguists. “The Constitution (Satversme) contains the text of the oath in the Latvian literary language. The oath, as we know, cannot be changed in terms of its form or content, otherwise it no longer is the oath. If the oath were to be given in writing, then this would be acceptable, as the Latgalian written language is standardized and is the second variety of Latvian alongside the literary language. Spoken Latgalian is not standardized – every individual speaks in their own native dialect. This could also be seen at the time the oaths were given – Viļums spoke in one dialect, Igaunis – in another. Giving the oath in a dialect would not be acceptable, as we have to cultivate and support the Latvian literary language. The possibilities and power of dialects is found in their use in literature, theater, and beyond that also in art, and everyday communication,” explained Kursīte-Pakule (Kursīte-Pakule 2011).

This issue was also described in the press of the ethnic minority community. For example, *Telegraf* journalist A. Dunda pointed out that a threat to the state language appeared unexpectedly – the Saeima members began to communicate from the platform in “incorrect”, i.e., Latgalian, language (Dunda 2011). Saeima member Viļums and SC Saeima member J. Tutins were also interviewed; this time both members of the Saeima had spoken Latgalian while debating. On this occasion, the Saeima Speaker had not forbidden them from speaking Latgalian, but had asked them to use the literary language so that records could be made in Saeima transcripts. “If one is not comfortable with the existence of two equal forms of the state language (Latgalian and Latvian), a solution will need to be found. One of these is to grant Latgalian regional language status, which would allow it to be used in the schools and local governments of Latgale,” stated Viļums in an interview with the newspaper *Telegraf*.

It should be noted that, in accordance with contemporary linguistic terminology, there is the Latgalian written language, on one hand, and the Latgalian

A discussion among  
professionals in *Jurista  
vārds*

The use of language for  
official communications

dialects of High Latvian (High Latvian also contains the Selonian dialects), on the other. As noted in the *Valodniecības pamatterminu skaidrojošā vārdnīca* (*The Explanatory Dictionary of Linguistic Terminology*), the Latgalian written language “[is] a partially standardized regional variety of Latvian, which has been developed on the basis of the Latgalian dialects. The Latgalian written language is used for written communication as well as for literature and public speech” (VPSV 2007, 204), while the “Latgalian dialects” [are] “dialects of High Latvian spoken in Latgale and northeastern Vidzeme” (VPSV 2007, 204-205).

In the opinion of University of Latvia professor and sociolinguist I. Druviete, “The State Language Law specifies that in official communications, the norms of the Latvian literary language are to be followed, therefore, specifically the Latvian literary language is to be used, not a different existing form of Latvian. There is no doubt that in communicating in the national parliament and for official communications in national and local government institutions, both in its spoken and written forms, only the literary language can be used. The use of any other variety of Latvian indicates a lack of understanding of elementary sociolinguistic axioms. If someone wishes to suggest a review of the State Language Law, then this must be done according to other methods and in so doing one must also be clearly aware of the negative impact of such actions on the maintaining of the status of Latvian as the only state and official language” (Druviete 2011a, 20-21).

Article 3, Section 4 of the State Language Law states that the government will ensure the preservation, protection, and development of the Latgalian written language as a historical variety of Latvian by providing various possibilities for its advancement in terms of linguistic research (for example, the opportunity to receive funding from the national research program) as well as education (for example, the incorporation of information about the Latgalian written language in the educational content of schools and universities, support for its study and the development of learning materials, courses at universities and its teaching in general education schools, see Chapter 6).

“A Latgalian Latgale is a Latvian Latgale – the Latgalian written language, despite prohibitions on its use in printing and Russification policies, has served as an important support for Latvian identity for centuries. Only an informed society can care for its language [...]” as stated by I. Sperga during a linguists’ discussion (Sperga 2011, 22-23).

It is possible that the regulations governing the use of dialects and other language varieties should be reviewed from time to time with respect to the aforementioned issues with the oath of office as well as in terms of the form in which place names are written and information about these names is documented (this is an aspect of the use of the Latgalian written language which has of late become topical for local governments in Latgale). However, it cannot be permitted that a special status is given to any Latvian dialect in government administration – this includes the giving of the oath of office in the Saeima. Every resident of Latvia, not just Latgalians, must be able to understand the oath.

"There is no denying that various dialects and languages used within the territory of Latvia must develop on a cultural level. Likewise, one cannot forbid two people from Latgale or Kurzeme to speak with each other in their dialect. At the same time, the introduction of these dialects into the work of the Saeima would be the first step on the path to total chaos in the domain of language use within the country. [...] How many different official languages and dialects could there be in a country whose total number of residents does not even reach two million?" This was the rhetorical question posed by the editorial board of the newspaper *Dienas Bizness* (DB 2011).

## 8.2. The referendum on state language status for Russian

2011 was also a year for signature gathering. The party alliance Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai" – "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK (The National Alliance "All for Latvia" – "For Fatherland and Freedom"/LNNK) collected the necessary ten thousand signatures at the beginning of 2011 to mean that during the period from May 11 to June 9 of that year, signatures could continue to be gathered supporting changes to Article 112 of the Latvian Constitution, namely, that the government guarantees the ability to receive primary and secondary education without cost [with the change made to the Constitution stating: in the Latvian language].

Seeing how quickly "Visu Latvijai" was moving ahead with its project, one did not have to wait long for a reaction: as early as in March 2011, the organization Vienota Latvija (United Latvia) in cooperation with the association Dzimtā valoda (Native language), established by V. Lindermans and J. Osipovs, began to gather signatures so that Russian would be recognized as the second state language of Latvia. "Latvian and Russian radicals are competing again. This time in an attempt to change the Constitution with respect to the language question. One side demands that government-funded Russian schools completely switch to teaching in Latvian from the beginning of next year. The goal of the other side is that Russian officially become the second state language of Latvia," – TV3 program *Nekā Personīga* (Nothing personal), April 3, 2011.

Thus, on September 9, 2011, 12,533 voter signatures were submitted to the Central Election Commission (Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija – CVK) in order to change Articles 4, 18, 21, 101, and 104 of the Latvian Constitution by specifying Russian in these as the second state language. The next steps of this process were carried out by the CVK using government funds. Between November 1, 2011 and November 30, 2011, signatures were gathered in favor of the proposal of the draft law Grozījumi LR Satversmē (Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia). In accordance with Article 25 of the aforementioned law, a draft law amending the Constitution proceeds to the next step if it is signed by no less than one tenth of the total number of eligible voters in the most recent Saeima elections. Based on the total number of voters in the 11<sup>th</sup> Saeima elections, this meant

Background of the  
language referendum

Discussions and  
publications

that 153,232 signatures had to be gathered. The CVK determined that the submitted number of signatures was sufficient; there were a total of 187,378 or 12.4% of the total number of eligible voters during the previous Saeima elections.

The signatures of Rīga mayor N. Ušakovs, Saeima member N. Kabanovs as well as a number of SC local government deputies were also among those collected in favor of these constitutional changes (Druviete 2015a).

This event was reported on very widely in the mass media in terms of information given on the progress of this process, and analytical publications and clips were also produced. “Thank you, Mr. Ušakovs, for the clarity!” said publicist L. Lapsa (Lapsa 2011). A. Panteļējevs, a journalist for the newspaper *Diena* and a publicist, referred to the mayor’s participation in supporting the referendum with the term “Ušokoviāda”: “N. Ušakovs, head of Saskaņas Centrs, signed his support as a ‘private citizen’ for the organization of a referendum intended to institute Russian as the second state language. At the same time he flooded the mass media with lengthy works of prose about how this step was intended and not intended.” (Panteļējevs 2011) A week later it became known that the mayors of Rēzekne and Zilupe had also given their signatures in support of the referendum. A. Panteļējevs pointed out: “Politics is not a sandbox. It should be strongly stated on its doors – no playing around allowed! Minors will not be admitted!” (Panteļējevs 2011).

The number of signatures was sufficient for the CVK to submit the draft law *Grozījumi Latvijas Republikas Satversmē* (Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia) to the President who, in turn, sent the law to the Saeima with an accompanying letter emphasizing that these changes were in conflict with the fundamental nature of the Latvian Constitution. However, the existing law did not give the President or the Saeima the right to prevent a referendum, therefore, the draft law *Grozījumi Latvijas Republikas Satversmē* proceeded to a referendum vote. The CVK provided 1,712,878 LVL from the state budget to fund the referendum (Druviete 2015a).

Gathering signatures and holding referenda are components of a democracy; however, in terms of money, the cost is high, and this has potentially serious consequences. M. Krautmanis showed this metaphorically with the headline “Referendum matches by gasoline barrels” (Krautmanis 2011), while, B. Lulle, speaking ironically of the frequency of referenda referred to Latvia as a “Referendum practice ground” (Lulle 2011), and *Latvijas Avīze* (*The Newspaper of Latvia*) stated that “The referenda are standing in line one after another” (23.04.2011). “And what will the next referendum be about – about joining Russia?” E. Veidemane asked rhetorically in an NRA-organized discussion (Diskusija 2011).

“It’s playing an irresponsible game with important matters. The negative consequences of this possible referendum can already be felt in the language environment and situation, and we are thrown back ten, if not a whole twenty years – in the public space the same discussions are taking place as in 1988, when state language status was renewed for Latvian. We must find a way to convince people that Latvian must be dominant in areas regulated by the government, as well as

The inability of the president and Saeima to influence the situation

for communication within society,” explained I. Druviete in the NRA discussion (Diskusija 2011). Jelgava mayor and Chairman of the Board of the Society Integration Foundation A. Rāviņš thought similarly. On May 4, 2011 he said: “The ‘Tēvzemieši’ [the members of the party alliance Nacionālā apvienība “Visu Latvijai” – “Tēvzemei un Brīvībai”/LNNK] have greatly helped – greatly moved the country in the direction of a two-language system. It is clear that we were slowly moving towards an integrated society, mutual understanding of national issues had improved, and many European countries looked to us as a country which up until now had been resolving this inter-ethnic problem very well...a problem which currently may be sharper and more painful in other countries than in Latvia. But this categorical move offered by “Visu Latvijai!” makes this problem worse.” (Rāviņš 2011)

The national referendum occurred on February 18, 2012. The question on the ballot paper asked, “Are you in favor of approving the draft law Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, which would bestow on the Russian language the status of the second state language?”. The possible answers were “For” and “Against”. Article 79 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia states that a constitutional amendment submitted to popular approval via a referendum would be approved if at least half of the eligible voters voted in favor of it. In accordance with Population Registry data from the PMLP, on the date of the referendum there were 1,545,004 eligible voters (Druviete 2015a) and 1.087 million or 70.37% of citizens participated in the vote.

#### Referendum results

Tautas nobalsošanas zīme 2012. gada 18. februārī

**Vai jūs esat par likumprojekta**  
**“Grozījumi Latvijas Republikas Satversmē”**  
**pieņemšanu,**  
kas paredz krievu valodai noteikt  
otras valsts valodas statusu?

Atzīmējiet ar “+” sev vēlamo atbildi – “PAR” vai “PRET”

PAR  PRET 

Zīme, kurā būs atzīmēti gan “PAR”, gan “PRET” vai nebūs atzīmēta neviena  
no šīm atbildēm, tiks uzskatīta par nederīgu

Figure 103. The ballot from the February 18, 2012 referendum concerning the amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.

**The referendum as an  
indicator of the unity of  
society**

The language referendum unified society not just in Latvia. Voters abroad stood in long lines for hours to express their support for the status of Latvian as the only state language of Latvia. In this way, the people connected with Latvia showed that at decisive moments they are able to be unified. “We went to the language referendum as if to a battle for our country, because the language is our country.” (Beitnere 2016, 28)

Once the votes were counted, the results of the referendum were as follows: 821,722 or 74.8% of voters voted against second state language status for Russian, while 273,347 or 24.88% of voters voted for granting this status.

| Region       | Number of voters<br>(18.02.2012) | Voting results |         |           |
|--------------|----------------------------------|----------------|---------|-----------|
|              |                                  | FOR            | AGAINST | Invalid * |
| <b>Total</b> | 1 545 004                        | 273 347        | 821 722 | 3524      |
| Rīga         | 463 197                          | 127 784        | 225 437 | 1443      |
| Vidzeme      | 409 168                          | 35 164         | 262 643 | 706       |
| Latgale      | 235 969                          | 78 736         | 62 369  | 575       |
| Kurzeme      | 204 616                          | 12 282         | 132 708 | 247       |
| Zemgale      | 232 054                          | 19 381         | 138 565 | 553       |

Figure 104. Referendum results by region. Statistics: CVK 2012

|                  | Number of Ballots |        |
|------------------|-------------------|--------|
| <b>FOR</b>       | 273347            | 17,69% |
| <b>AGAINST</b>   | 821722            | 53,19% |
| <b>Invalid *</b> | 3524              | 0,23%  |

Figure 105. Total number of ballot papers in ballot boxes: 1 098 593. Number of voters: 1 545 004. Statistics: CVK 2012

A wide-ranging response to the referendum could be seen among Latvia's neighbors: Russia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Professor Mark Dyachkov of the Moscow Pedagogical University stated in February 2012 in evaluating the referendum: “Vladimirs Lindermans and those affiliated with him are provocateurs. As local residents, they knew that the result of the referendum would be negative. They raised a commotion and forced the government to waste money on a referendum. [...] If Russian were to be a state language in Latvia, Russians could choose not to learn Latvian and a two-community state would evolve here with a large gulf: on

one side there would be the Latvians, and on the other – the non-Latvians. [...] This situation is in the interests of some circles of the Russian leadership in terms of Latvia's incorporation into Russia." (Djačkovs 2012).

"Something like this would be unthinkable in Lithuania!" stated Professor Alvydas Butkus of Vytautas Magnus University, expressing his indignation. "In Lithuania, these kinds of Lindermans arrive much more freely and more often, because they arrive here not only from Russia, but also from Poland, and in the Vilnius and Šalčininkai Districts, Lithuanian citizens are 'indoctrinated' from the church pulpit and from public lectures." (Butkus 2012). Butkus published his thoughts about the referendum in *Latvijas Avīze* on February 24, 2012 a few days after the referendum had taken place in Latvia; he called it "Latvia's cautionary tale to Lithuania".

"As the referendum approached, Lithuania's politicians and political scientists claimed that it was an internal matter for Latvia and it would not be appropriate to intervene. However, even with an unaided eye it could be seen that this was becoming an event relevant to the entire Baltic region, with the Kremlin attempting to drive a wedge into the weakest part of this region. If there had been success, the Slavic-speaking radicals of Estonia's Narva and Lithuania's Šalčininkai, who continue to yearn for disintegration in their countries, would have received new encouragement. The unity and activity of Latvia's citizens prevented this and at the same time stopped an attempt to destabilize the region. The referendum has given important lessons to Latvia's neighbors and now it is only up to them whether these lessons will have been taken into account." (Butkus 2012).

Here, as mentioned in this article by Butkus, Lithuania also has some things to consider. "The comments by Lithuania's political scientists that the incomplete laws of Latvia had permitted this situation to come about could also be applied to Lithuania itself – we still don't have a law that would permit the dismissal of employees of government institutions who ignore the State Language Law, or do not wish or are unable to implement the decisions of the Supreme Court." As a second lesson, Butkus pointed to the divisive nature of Lindermans' "Par dzimto valodu!" ("For the native language!"), namely, that a party formed on the basis of a language or ethnicity already has a nation- and society-dividing nature programmed into it, though it conceals itself as a defender of ethnic diversity and minority ethnicity rights. The integration of Russian speakers into the reestablished Latvia is made more difficult by the covering up of historical truths and the denial of the fact of occupation by the Kremlin.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the referendum, which seemed to many in Lithuania an internal matter for Latvia, has still provided Lithuania and the Lithuanians an opportunity to consider the sensitive spots in their own language policy and the defense of their country's basic values.

The language referendum was also actively discussed in Estonia. On the day of the referendum, the leading article in the newspaper *Postimees* stated: "It is absolutely clear that the Latvians do not want Russian to be the second state

Opinions on the  
referendum in neighboring  
countries – Lithuania

Opinions on the  
referendum in neighboring  
countries – Estonia

language. The referendum organizers understand that the Latvians are afraid to lose their language and culture and therefore use the referendum as a provocation to sow hatred between Latvians and Russians. However, sowing hatred is not in the interests of Latvia's Russians, as they live in Latvia together with the Latvians. Exactly the opposite: Latvia's Russians have learned the Latvian language very well. Also, the Russian language proficiency of Latvians is very good. Good language proficiency on both sides points to trust and social cohesion. Sowing hatred only serves the Kremlin's desire for empire. To maintain power, Russia must show its citizens that there are places where Russians live which are even worse than Russia. The Latvians' mistake is that their 1922 Constitution is still in force, which even allows for such a referendum." (*Postimees* 2012).

The Estonian Russian politician Jevgeni Ossinovski, who was at the time a member of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Commission and member of the Social Democratic Party, stated: "The referendum was an attempt by Russian residents to show that they do not agree with Latvia's politics, at the base of which is ethnicity. Estonia's situation differs from Latvia's political situation in that the heads of Estonia's "Russian" parties are Estonians, but in Latvia they are ethnic Russians. On the other hand, Estonia's National Party is not as radical as Latvia's National Alliance. The referendum could be a threat to the Latvian state, therefore, Latvia should concentrate more on integration issues. The solution to the problem could be changing the Constitution." (Ossinovskis 2012). However, in general, as noted by Estonians, the referendum did not influence Latvia's education or language policy. Veiko Spolītis, who regularly comments on events in Latvia for the Estonian press, noted: "[...] the referendum result took the language question off the agenda for at least 20 years. The referendum was not organized because of language: Latvia's Russian citizens tried to solve other problems with the referendum and this was not hidden by Rīga's mayor or others. However, the referendum did pose a number of questions in Latvia: How is a radical non-citizen able to undermine the structure of the state if the problem is not even in the Constitution; Why do taxpayers have to pay millions for this kind of referendum? Why did 280,000 [in fact 273,347] people support this referendum? The referendum has three actual reasons:

- 1) the radicalization of some groups as a result of the economic crisis,
- 2) the signature-gathering initiated by the National Alliance to shift the language of instruction to Latvian in schools,
- 3) the Reform Party's promise to form a ruling coalition with "Saskaņas Centrs" (Harmony Center), which remained just a promise and was never followed through on." (Spolītis 2012).

The most powerful effect on the national consciousness came from the humiliating fact of the referendum itself. This is also confirmed by Minister of Justice G. Bērziņš: "The signature gathering itself for Russian as a second state language must in total be seen as an immoral act, as it created ethnic tension in Latvia's society by encouraging disrespect by one portion of the population against the

Latvian state, its symbols, and the Latvian language as one of its foundations as a state." (Bērziņš 2011) "This time let's not speak about the technical, administrative, or financial aspects of introducing a second state language, because money isn't the issue, but truly the very life of the nation. However, if identity and Latvianness seem like empty words to someone, then they should calculate how much it will cost for all official and commercial information to be duplicated, restructuring the education system, educating and testing government officials, and so on. [...] Should Latvian tax payers be forced to pay, paradoxically, for their own language's endangerment?" (Druviete 2013, 22)

### **The year after the referendum or lessons from the referendum**

After the referendum, it became clear: Latvia had to take into account a quarter of its citizens who for various reasons protested against Latvian as the only state language. I. Druviete, in analyzing the referendum, pointed out: "The true reasons for the referendum are to be found in Latvia's history, the ethnolinguistic structure of our population, and Latvia's geopolitical situation. The "humanitarian dimension" of Russia's foreign policy with respect to its national politics has already included Latvian language policy since the end of the 1980s, regularly repeating stories concerning Latvia's supposedly faulty integration policies and discrimination against Russian speakers. Also, the Latvians who claim that integration policies in Latvia have been unsuccessful are mistaken." (Druviete 2013, 18-19). Latvia's language policy has been evaluated by Gabrielle Hogan-Brun, who stated that: "Latvia is among those countries, which have the most notable and best formulated language policy as part of their internal politics. It is important to note that Latvian language policy has been designed based on sociolinguistic theory, taking into account the experience of many other countries. Experts from other countries have been involved in the planning of its language policy, which has received international recognition." (Hogan-Brun et al. 2009)

On February 11, 2013, one year after the referendum, following the initiative of European Parliament member I. Vaidere, the conference *Gads pēc valodas referenduma: paveiktais un darāmais* (A year after the referendum: that which has been accomplished and remains to be done) was organized in order to discuss what had been accomplished during the year and to plan necessary events to strengthen Latvian in its status as the only state language. Conference participants included the then Minister of Justice J. Bordāns, Minister of Culture Ž. Jaunzeme-Grende, Chairwoman of the Saeima Human Rights and Social Matters Commission I. Druviete, Director of the State Language Center (Valsts valodas centrs) M. Baltiņš, demographic expert and the Chairman of the Management Board of the Future Foundation (Nākotnes fonds) I. Mežs, Director of the Latvian Language Agency (Latviešu valodas aģentūra) J. Valdmanis, and Chairman of the State Language Commission (Valsts valodas komisija) A. Veisbergs. In the course of the discussion, the experts concluded that, while a certain number of events and activities were planned and carried out to strengthen the status of Latvian as

**The conference a year after the referendum: that which has been accomplished and remains to be done**

**A diversity of views**

the only state language, the situation with respect to the use of Latvian and attitudes towards it had grown worse; a significant gap existed between the ability to use Latvian and the desire to use it in everyday life (Vaidere 2013a).

Vaidere criticized the appearance of new Latvian television broadcasts in Russian during the previous year as well as the fact that the descriptions of military parades had been translated into Russian for the first time, saying that the translation of nationally important events into Russian did not guarantee interest by Russian speakers in the country or encourage their loyalty. Vaidere, a Saeima member, was dissatisfied with the poor language knowledge of children and young people born after 1990, the habit of using Russian, and the lack of motivation to speak Latvian (Vaidere 2013b).

On the other hand, Latvian president A. Bērziņš had a different opinion, stating on Radio Latvia (Latvijas Radio) on February 18, 2013 that: "The referendum concerning granting state language status to Russian has not promoted division in society in the long term." He felt that the initiators of the referendum were a very small group, which wanted to show itself, but in total the referendum had only confirmed that the only state language of Latvia is Latvian. As a result, the only ones to be divided by the referendum are politicians, but they are only a tiny portion of society (Grīnberga 2013).

Therefore, a year after the referendum, the political elite could not agree on the lesson provided by the referendum. One side felt that enough had been done and that the results would only be seen after a longer period of time, while the other side felt that too little had been done and that what had been done was insufficient. However, one thing is certainly clear – the referendum was "a telling indicator of the necessity to constantly maintain and explain the principles of Latvia's language policy to Latvians as well as other residents of Latvia" (Druviete 2013, 19).

### 8.3. The development of the preamble to the constitution

**Changes in the law  
regarding the initiation  
of referenda and proposal  
of laws**

The initiation of the language referendum was simplified not only by the political beliefs of certain political leaders, but also by the unnecessarily simple procedure for proposing a referendum. In order to secure full funding from the CVK (Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission)), i.e., the state, for organizing and covering all of its associated expenses, the initiating group must collect only 10,000 signatures. Such a low bar for proposing a referendum does not exist in any other country in the world, and the language referendum showed that it is necessary to further develop the legal procedures for referenda so that the fundamental values of the Latvian state are not endangered by a supposedly democratic path (Jarinovska 2013). Therefore, following heated discussions, as early as on November 8, 2012 the Saeima approved a change to the law Regarding the initiation of referenda and proposal of laws (Par tautas nobalsošanu un

likumu ierosināšanu). The name of the law was also changed: Regarding referendum, the proposal of laws, and the European citizens' initiative (Par tautas nobalsošanu, likumu ierosināšanu un Eiropas pilsoņu iniciatīvu) (available at: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=58065>), and it raised the number of signatures necessary in order for initiating a referendum on changes to the Constitution or laws. From January 1, 2015, initiators must collect signatures equaling one tenth of the total number of voters (therefore, approximately 155,000) in order to initiate a referendum on changes to the Constitution, laws, or on dismissing the Saeima (for more see Druviete 2015a, 11).

Since the restoration of independence, wide-ranging discussions have occurred among lawyers, politicians, and across society as a whole regarding the goals, purpose, and nature of the Latvian state. These discussions became especially heated both before and after the February 2012 referendum and began again with new energy when initiatives with similar content appeared – for example, the automatic granting of citizenship to all non-citizens (Druviete 2012).

In the context of these events, a new concept established itself with regard to rights in Latvia – the inviolable core of the Constitution (neaizskaramais Satversmes kodols). On September 17, 2012, this concept was based on the Constitutional Rights Committee opinion *Regarding the constitutional foundations of the Latvian state and the inviolable core of the Constitution* (Par Latvijas valsts konstitucionālajiem pamatiem un neaizskaramo Satversmes kodolu) (available at: [http://www.president.lv/images/modules/item/PDF/17092012\\_Viedoklis\\_2.pdf](http://www.president.lv/images/modules/item/PDF/17092012_Viedoklis_2.pdf)). One of the proposals contained in this document was that the Latvian Constitution should be supplemented with a preamble. “From the perspective of language policy, the preamble can have more than just a symbolic meaning or political purpose. It strengthens the argumentation to work out very concrete norms and securing funding for the research, learning, and protection of the Latvian language. Along with this addition, the fundamental law of our country gives even clearer guidelines and policy for action in strengthening the integral symbols and traits – language among them – of the Latvian state.” (Druviete 2015a, 12)

The Preamble indicates that the Latvian language is an unchangeable part of our Constitution's core. Article 4 of the Latvian Constitution is among the articles of the Constitution, which cannot be changed through a referendum; Latvian is identified as the state language not only in the introduction to the Constitution, but also in Articles 4, 18, 21, and 104. “In this way, the legislature has clearly indicated that in the area of state language policy no retreat is possible and that the role of Latvian must actually be strengthened.” (Druviete, Kārklīņa, Kusiņš et. al 2014, 296)

On June 19, 2014, following lengthy discussions, the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia approved the decision of adding an introductory section (i.e., the Preamble) to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (the Constitution itself was originally approved in 1922). From this moment “the basic law of the state also can be considered a fundamental element of national identity, as the collection of consti-

The development of  
the Preamble to the  
Constitution

tutional values of the Latvian state is clear in it" (Balodis 2014, 5). The Preamble of the Constitution states that "[...] the Latvian state is formed [...] to guarantee the Latvian [...] language's [...] existence and development through the centuries [...]". 94 members of the Saeima voted for the constitutional changes which added the Preamble to the Constitution.

#### 8.4. The development of the Electronic Mass Media Law

Language issues  
in the Electronic Mass  
Media Law

On July 12, 2010, the Saeima passed and the President promulgated the Electronic Mass Media Law (Elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu likums – EPL), which regulated the functioning and rules applying to the existing mass media sources within Latvia's jurisdiction (available at: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=214039>). Not only was the path along which this law developed complicated and contentious, but so was the process of its amendment.

During the presidency of A. Bērziņš, on October 23, 2014, the Saeima approved the first amendments to the EPL law relating to the language question. The purpose of these amendments was to implement a legal mechanism for the shifting of broadcasting on these programs to a single language. In other words, it was necessary to ensure a transition from a situation where broadcast permits for a particular program would specify the proportion that programming had to be broadcast in each language to a situation where the broadcast permit specifies that programming is completely in a single language – either Latvian or a foreign language (Briedis 2016). Following these amendments to the law and based on the SIA "Krievu hītu radio" (Russian hit radio) complaint to the Constitutional Court, a case was introduced with the argument that property rights were being infringed upon, i.e., the right to conduct business; objections stating that adjusting the language proportions did not correspond to the principle of legitimate expectation; and finally that freedom of speech was being limited – that of radio broadcasters in disseminating information as well as that of the radio program audience itself in receiving it.

Changes in the Electronic  
Mass Media Law and  
the amount of foreign  
language on the radio

At the beginning of the presidency of R. Vējonis, on October 29, 2015, the Saeima passed a second set of amendments to the EPL, which related to the language question. As indicated by barrister E. Briedis, Point 27 of the EPL, which regulates the transition, was also changed as a result of these amendments. This point stated that as of January 1, 2016, those radio programs which up until now had to broadcast at least 51% content in Latvian would have to broadcast entirely in Latvian in the future (instead of 50%, as Point 27 specified in accordance with the "first amendments" of the EPL with respect to the language question) (Briedis 2016).

On November 7, 2015, the President decided not to promulgate the second series of amendments to the EPL and asked that they be reviewed for a second time by the Saeima. The reasoning for this decision is found in the letter to the Speaker

of the Saeima, which is available on the President's website. However, the Saeima passed these amendments, overriding the President's veto. "In accordance with the information collected by the critics of the Saeima's actions, the balance of this process is as follows: prior to the amendments made in 2014 to the EPL, approximately 34% of the 67 broadcasters in Latvia were in a foreign language. If the 2014 amendments were put into effect (which specified a requirement that all broadcasters that had been broadcasting at least 50% in Latvian up until this point switch entirely to Latvian), the proportion of foreign language broadcasts in Latvia would decrease to 25%. However, after the 2015 amendments to the law (which specified a requirement to switch to broadcasting entirely in Latvian only for those broadcasters currently broadcasting in Latvian at least 51% of the time), it may be that the proportion of programming in foreign languages beginning in 2017, instead of decreasing compared to the current situation, will do the exact opposite and increase by perhaps up to 45%." (Gailīte 2016b).

Explaining language protection in the context of fundamental rights, University of Latvia Associate Professor A. Kučs writes:

"Article 4 of the Constitution, and Latvia's historical situation, give lawmakers not only the right, but the responsibility to protect the state language [i.e., Latvian] and react to the decrease of the state language in Latvia's information space by adjusting the norms regulating language use. However, this type of action by lawmakers must be in accordance with the Constitution and international human rights norms that apply to Latvia. The most significant problem, which can be seen in evaluating the actions by lawmakers with respect to specific amendments to the EPL, is the lack of any systematic policy in strengthening the state language in Latvia's mass media environment. It is not clear how the limitations contained in the amendments – a shift to broadcasting only in one language – is part of the strategy to strengthen the state language and whether with these amendments the goal of strengthening the state language across the entire territory of the country is achieved." (Kučs 2016)

Political leaders in Latvia expressed the opinion that the signs of hybrid war can be identified at various levels and this, as noted by D. Beitnere-Le Galla, is occurring on an invisible frontline – individual awareness.

"For 25 years, Latvia has had a carefree attitude towards the mass media, permitting a divided media space, excusing it on the grounds of democracy and freedom of speech. [...] In a democratic state, it is not possible for such a large number of TV channels of dubious quality from foreign nations to operate. [...] Tuning into the FM radio, it is difficult to believe that Latvia has such a large need for so many stations broadcasting in Russian. [...] Accessing the major portals in Latvia, one has the feeling that these are Russia's portals translated into Latvian – not a day passes without Putin's image and alarming headlines about our eastern neighbor. The same is the case with the chronicling of Russia's pop culture icons, without which the poor Latvians apparently feel pushed off of the cultural map." (Beitnere 2016).

**Signs of hybrid war?**

Reviewing the normative regulation of Latvia's radio stations with respect to the question of the use of the state language, it can be concluded that constitutional rights (the state's responsibility to secure its informational space and societal integration and the necessity to protect itself against a propaganda war carried out by an aggressive country), human rights (access to information), commercial rights (the competition for listeners and therefore also the commercial market), and other aspects have collided in this battle (Gailīte 2016a). However, the question remains unanswered: who in the state will resolve the question of security in the media, and how?

### 8.5. Runāsim latviski! (Let's speak Latvian!) Or questions of Latvian language use

#### **Language choice in communication: the actions and responsibility of officials**

The greatest concern characterizing the viability of Latvian is connected with the question of language use in society. This has been – and continues to be – a topical question. If one excludes external appearance and gene-influenced body functions, then none of the factors forming identity are inherited. Environment determines one's linguistic affiliation, value system, sense of belonging, and other learned determining factors for ethnic identity. Ethnic identity can be based on geography, nationality, origin, family, culture and subculture, religion, language, race or a combination of any of these aspects. It is a mixture of conceptual and behavior-characterizing qualities, which characterize a group and separate it from others. In this view, a central role is taken by the collective awareness of a common origin (Seweryn, Smagacz 2006, 23).

How strong is our collective awareness? In the current circumstances characterized by multiculturalism, multilingualism, and other “multi-notions”, will we be able to maintain our national identity and our pride in it?

Currently, the behavior of Latvians in accommodating Russian speakers in informal communication remains relevant, as in this way the formation of a Latvian-speaking environment is not supported while at the same time the self-sufficiency of Russian is contributed to. However, something that is beyond understanding is the use of broken Russian by government officials for public communications, which demonstrates their incompetence with respect to understanding language policy. Latvian passivity with respect to language choice in communication is a real threat to the integration of society on the basis of Latvian (*Valodas situācija Latvijā 2011*, 111).

Can we blame an average resident if this practice is demonstrated by government officials who, when addressed by journalists, do not speak in Latvian in the media? “Latvians curse the Latvian language situation. But every individual Latvian is responsible for it! The life of the language is on the tongue of every Latvian. What do our statesmen look like to Russian voters as they stutter in Russian? Like fools!” (Zālīte 2010).

Language choice for public  
communication

Latvian language use –  
a fundamental question

Let us recall Kravcovs, who, in 2011, while still a member of the 10<sup>th</sup> Saeima, was unable to respond to a question in Latvian from TV5 journalist A. Mamikins and demonstratively left the television studio as a result. While on August 31, 2010, then Minister of Transport K. Gerhards acted in accordance with the position of state language policy. He did not submit to the demands of the host of the program *Bez cenzūras (Uncensored)* to speak in Russian and walked out of the TV5 studio during a live broadcast. The minister refused to respond in Russian, saying that he had already stated he would speak in Latvian and that the studio could, most likely, secure a translation.

“That is an exaggerated interpretation of societal integration,” indicates Druviete. “This is also not a question of language quality, but instead it is about the attitude towards Latvian. No one will criticize and interviewee if their language has mistakes, but why is it regularly demonstrated to us that in Latvia it is completely normal to avoid speaking Latvian and that journalists accept this as completely normal? In this way, faulty signals are sent regarding the meaning of the use of the state language, which delays the integration of society on the basis of the Latvian language.” (Druviete 2008, 68-69) On April 29, 2011, then Minister of Finance A. Vilks took a strong position on this matter: “As a government official I have decided to speak in the state language (i.e., Latvian).”

However, language proficiency problems can still be found in other government services and institutions. Thus, in 2010, *Latvijas Avīze (The Newspaper of Latvia)* raised the alarm concerning insufficient knowledge of Latvian among police officials. As a result, then Interior Minister L. Mūrniece decided to test the Latvian language proficiency of police officials. It turned out that 219 policemen, or 3% of the force, had a level of Latvian language proficiency inadequate for performing their duties. Police officials must speak Latvian at the highest – C proficiency – level. The State Language Center (Valsts valodas centrs – VVC) assigned administrative penalties to them and asked that they improve their proficiency in the state language within five months (Valsts policija 2010).

### **Latvian in the job market**

In 2015, the VVC produced an initiative based on observations from the workplace and submissions received by the VVC from residents – i.e., a number of submissions had been received concerning the fact that in workplaces where duties associated with a particular job are conducted in the presence of other people (for example, in shops, on public transport, in offices and institutions), a foreign language – most often Russian – was used for communication among employees. At the same time, questions continued to be received inquiring as to why officials gave interviews in the mass media in foreign languages. For this reason, the VVC issued a call to speak Latvian in the workplace.

“In the opinion of the State Language Center, government officials giving interviews to the mass media, especially media sources registered in the Republic of Latvia, should use only Latvian, in this way showing respect to the Latvian state

Latvian for communication  
among employees

**VVC community  
assistants**

and its state language,” the VVC emphasizes. The State Language Law does not apply to language use by Latvia’s residents for informal communication; however, if communication among employees in a foreign language can be heard by others – passengers, customers in a shop, individuals visiting an office or institution – then this cannot be considered informal communication. “Let us not forget that Latvia is the only place in the world where the existence and development of Latvian can be guaranteed. At the same time, a decrease in the domains where Latvian is used in its role as the state language can be considered a threat to this status. Therefore, we ask that every employer speaks to their employees about the importance of using the state language in conducting professional business, and also that every official use the state language when giving interviews to mass media sources,” the VVC points out (Delfi 2015).

In September 2015, the VVC presented another initiative: the establishment of a community assistants’ institute – language specialists who were to offer consultation with respect to question of state language use to Latvia’s municipalities, cities, and rural parishes. The functions of the community assistants would include, for example, evaluating the correspondence of public texts with the norms of the Latvian literary language and providing suggestions for correcting identified discrepancies. It was hoped that the community assistants would be affiliated with the VVC and that they would also be given tasks in the region under their oversight to evaluate the situation of Latvian language use and relay information concerning identified discrepancies to VVC officials. The community assistants would provide consultations to businesspeople concerning questions of Latvian language use, namely, regarding grammatical, spelling, and stylistic norms and their adaptation for specific uses, as not infrequently the norms of the State Language Law are violated due to carelessness and lack of relevant knowledge (Tieslietu ministrija 2015).

On December 14, 2015, the first state language inspectorate community assistants began their work, with their task being to work against inadequacies in Latvian language use and to ensure that the State Language Law is followed in the public space. Their goal: instead of assigning penalties, to offer advice on how to prevent violations of the State Language Law (Čunka 2015).

**The unjustified demand  
for Russian language  
knowledge – a cause of  
youth unemployment**

Youth unemployment is a pressing issue which is also discussed in the mass media and is connected to the situation of intense language competition. One reason for employers choosing not to hire young people is a lack of relevant experience, but another, which is no less important or relevant, is language proficiency. Often specifically due to a lack of Russian language knowledge, Latvian young people are discriminated against on the job market. This happens to those who have returned from abroad as well as to those who have recently finished high school. There even exists the harsh situation in which “young people and residents without Russian language knowledge cannot find work in some areas and for this reason leave to go work in Europe.” (Kursītis 2012).

In 2012, the Saeima amended the Employment Law (Darba likums), including in it a prohibition against requesting knowledge of a particular foreign language

in job advertisements if knowledge of this language is not necessary for the performance of the duties associated with the job. However, in practice this norm is not followed and Russian language knowledge is expected almost everywhere, while in the service industry it is effectively impossible to work without Russian language proficiency (Zvirbulis 2015).

The phrase in the Employment Law concerning knowledge which is “justifiably necessary for doing a job”, can be interpreted subjectively, as the word *justifiably* can be interpreted in various ways. In commenting on this, A. Kursītis stated: “Amendments to the Employment Law do not sufficiently protect those who do not speak Russian and wish to take these jobs, and this is one of the main reasons influencing youth emigration.” (Kursītis 2012).

### Communication by government institutions with residents

In 2011, a national census took place. 11 years had passed since the previous census in 2000. The 2000 national census was the first census since the reestablishment of Latvia's national independence, therefore, it was carefully considered and extensive preparations were made for it. The cardinal importance for organizing this census could be found in the considerable socioeconomic and demographic changes which had occurred on the job market, in households, the ethnic composition of the population, family types, education, sources of income, and housing conditions in the time that had passed since the previous national census (in 1989).

During preparations for the 2011 census, Latvia was still suffering from the economic crisis and therefore discussion focused on lower expenses and a smaller scope compared to the 2000 census. In the 2000 personal information page, which was to be filled out for all residents from the age of 7, two questions were included with respect to language: native language and proficiency in other languages.

Regarding the design of questions on the national census

|                                 |  |                                     |                                  |                                     |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 4. Your native language         |  | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Latvian | <input type="checkbox"/> Russian | <input type="checkbox"/> Belarusian |
| 4. Other (write in which one) → |  | <input type="text"/>                |                                  |                                     |

|                                                                        |                                                          |                                     |                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 5. Proficiency in other languages (not including your native language) |                                                          | 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Latvian | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Russian |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Belarusian                                 | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> English                      | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> German  |                                     |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> French                                     | 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (write in which one) → | <input type="text"/>                |                                     |

Figure 106. Language questions on the 2000 Latvian National Census form.  
Available at: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/dati/veidlapas-28293.html>

The 2011 Latvian National Census does not contain such questions. It seems at first as if everything is in order. “The questions on the survey are based on UN recommendations. There are subjects that are obligatory. Other questions can be added, too,” said the Deputy Director of the CSP Social Statistics Department, P. Vēģis. “For this decennial census, the CSP also selected questions connected with education and the use of the Latgalian language. [...] We chose the question about the Latgalian language, as non-governmental organizations in Latgale insisted on it. [...] At the same time, questions about the language most used at home and the ethnicity of residents, which are not on the list of obligatory topics, were included, because these have also been included in previous censuses.” (Tautas skaitīšana 2011).

It cannot be known who missed the mark on the formulation or interpretation of the questions; however, as in the 2011 census, the CSP survey form contains two questions concerning language use (thus, the number did not change) – one question to determine the language most used in the home and a second question to determine the number of people who speak Latgalian.

|                                                                      |                      |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--|--|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What language do you mostly use at home?</b>                      |                      |  |  |  |                                                                         |
| G02                                                                  | 1. Latvian           |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|                                                                      | 2. Russian           |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|                                                                      | 3. Belarusian        |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|                                                                      | 4. Ukrainian         |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|                                                                      | 5. Polish            |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|                                                                      | 6. Lithuanian        |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|                                                                      | 7. Other             |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|                                                                      | (indicate which one) |  |  |  |                                                                         |
| <b>Do you use the Latgalian variety of Latvian in everyday life?</b> |                      |  |  |  |                                                                         |
| G03                                                                  | 1. Yes               |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|                                                                      | 2. No                |  |  |  |                                                                         |
|                                                                      |                      |  |  |  | →H02<br>(for the respondent)<br>End of interview<br>(for other persons) |

Figure 107. Language questions on the 2011 Latvian National Census form. Available at: [http://www.csb.gov.lv/sites/default/files/dati/personas\\_anketa\\_25012011.pdf](http://www.csb.gov.lv/sites/default/files/dati/personas_anketa_25012011.pdf)

**The CSP's choice  
of language in  
communicating with  
the population**

As can be seen from the included questions, there is no question concerning the native language of the respondent (at home one can speak a language other than one's native language, after all) and no question regarding proficiency in other languages. Therefore, based on the 2011 census, it is not possible to say what is the native language and individual language proficiency of Latvia's residents.

However, the 2011 census also does not escape further confusion. Prior to the census, which officially began on March 1, 2011, Saeima member K. Šadurskis contacted the VVC on February 24, 2011 asking that it conduct an investigation into the CSP, which had distributed public advertisements for the census on a large scale in a foreign language. K. Šadurskis asked for it to be ascertained

whether the government's direct regulatory authority had carried out a government function in a foreign language and whether in organizing the census in Russian it was not violating the Latvian Constitution and laws specifying state language status. The Saeima member emphasized his concern over a movement towards the existence of two official languages in practice in the government's public communications (Šadurskis 2011).

The VVC also began administrative record keeping of violations of the State Language law in the census booklets; however, the CSP felt that the regulatory framework permitted public administrative bodies to provide public information on statistical surveys in foreign languages. Commenting on the investigation initiated by the State Language Center into the use of Russian in the census booklets, the CSP stated that it based this on UN recommendations, which suggest that explanatory materials should utilize the languages spoken by respective parts of the population.

The State Language Law also specifies that the Cabinet of Ministers determines the cases where an institution or person can provide information in a foreign language. At the same time, the corresponding government regulations state that public administration bodies can provide public information in foreign languages for statistical surveys. The CSP used this to justify the fact that the informational materials for the census were prepared in two languages – Latvian and Russian – corresponding to the proportion that these ethnicities that constitute of the total population, i.e., Latvians – 59.4% Russians – 27.6% (CSP 2011).

## 8.6. Discussions about language and questions of language quality

In 2011, on repeated occasions the regulatory policies of linguists and legal experts came into conflict. First of all, on November 17, 2010, linguists disagreed with the decision of the Senate of the Supreme Court, which stated that in contradiction to the system and spelling norms of the Latvian language, the state had to permit parents to register their child's name as *Otto* with two t's, which stands in opposition to spelling norms of the language. As a result, the birth certificate had to be changed from correct to incorrect spelling and a fine had to be paid for issuing a correct (!) birth certificate. The effects of this can still be seen in responses and comments. In 2011, based on the aforementioned court decision, several dozen parents used this "opportunity" to write personal names with a doubled obstruent. This "utilization" of this opportunity is ongoing. However, this fight is not against linguists, but against the Latvian language and its spelling system. In addition, who will answer the question of why, in violating one aspect of the spelling system, it is not permitted then to also violate others? One court decision satisfied the wishes of a few people, the spelling system was undermined, and privileges were assigned to some, which others do not have.

Violations of spelling norms

**The classification of  
profanity**

The next discussion involves the list of profanity demanded by lawyers and the great surprise of the Chairman of the Management Board of the Lawyers' Association of Latvia (Latvijas Juristu biedrība), R. Bunka, that it is not possible to create such a list. "The Lawyers' Association of Latvia treats with alarm the report provided by the Latvian Language Agency in which the words "padauza" (*slut*) and "slampa" (*slut*) are listed as rude words. [...] Even greater alarm is prompted by the linguists' conclusion, which places the crudest swear words into the category of vulgarisms, thus providing the opportunity to use these words without interference or fear of receiving sanction for their use." (Bunka 2011, 5) A lack of understanding, not inquiring further, a lack of knowledge regarding lexical categories, and not taking specialists' conclusions into account once again provides the basis for this type of claim by the lawyers and the interpretation by journalists that linguists consider words like *padauza* and *slampa* to be rude, but not any more profane than that. This is evidenced by newspaper headlines like: "Cūka – dzīvnieks vai lamuvārds? Juristi rosina likumā definēt rupjus vārdus" ("Pig – an animal or a curse word? Lawyers suggest defining rude words in the law"), "Vārdus «bļ\*ģ» un «pim\*is» neatzīst par lamu vārdiem" ("The words "bļ\*ģ"[wh\*re] and "pim\*is" [d\*ck] are not recognized as swear words"), and others.

**The ignoring of linguists'  
recommendations**

However, in order to dispel confusion, R. Bunka, instead of consulting the LVA for an explanation, complained to the President of Latvia with alarm regarding the incompetence of the linguists. Unfortunately, it is necessary to note that these issues were once again being incorrectly interpreted. Swear words (*lamu vārdi*) is a much broader category than rude words (*necenzēti vārdi*), as it contains not only rude words, but also other words, such as taboo words and vulgarisms, including lexical and stylistic ones. Therefore, from the perspective of understanding language categories, in penalizing petty hooliganism, including cursing by using rude words in public places, the "rude words" (*necenzēti vārdi*) had to be replaced with "swear words" (*lamu vārdi*) in the law. In this way, the entire spectrum of coarse and impolite words would be included, not just one portion. Secondly, the term "rude" (*necenzēts*) would disappear from the wording of the law, which the lawyers themselves had opposed in the context of interpreting the Constitution. However, the lawyers decided otherwise and moved to replace the term "rude words" (*necenzēti vārdi*) with "impolite behavior" (*nepieklājīga uzvedība*) in Article 167 of the Code of Administrative Offenses. However, this term has even broader possibilities for interpretation and the chosen solution is more awkward than its replacement (more on these questions can be read in the weekly publication *Jurista Vārds* (*The Lawyer's Word*) 16.08.2011). Unfortunately, linguists and lawyers have practically no cooperation with respect to resolving questions related to language, and the expression "lawyers have their own (lawyers') language" continues to be popular.

**The varied types of  
vocabulary in high school  
learning materials**

Journalists prompted another public scandal with respect to swear words – for a short time Part 1 of the Latvian language textbook for high schools, written by I. Dalbiņa and I. Lāčauniece and published by the publishing house RaKA, became a so-called textbook bestseller. On page 87 of this book were printed the rudest

Russian swear words. The authors used the lecture *Stylistically lowered vocabulary on the internet* (*Stilistiski pazeminātā leksika internetā*) from the conference *The mother tongue in the public space* (*Mātes valodas publiskajā telpā*) by linguist I. Urbanoviča. The authors of this textbook explain that in using this kind of material they wished to advance high school students' attitude towards language, and to teach the ability to think and analyze situations so that students would have a negative opinion of these words. However, there are also teachers, linguists, and representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija – IZM) who gave a negative evaluation of this published list – for example, Latvian language teacher A. Vanaga from Āgenskalns State Secondary School (Āgenskala Valsts ģimnāzija), in responding to journalist A. Drēziņš' questions, stated: "Russian swear words are known and can also be found in the slang dictionary, but that is a special publication and the only one where these should appear fully written out and explained. This book's authors are playing on the feelings of these young people, but this may achieve the opposite effect: the words can be used, they're written in a book after all... In using these words, I don't see a pedagogical instructive effect." (Drēziņš 2010).

A similar scandal occurred in September 2015 when at the aforementioned Āgenskalns State Secondary School a different Latvian language teacher, I. Ratinika, wrote on Twitter: "It turns out that interpreting Krivade's poem is the reason I received a reprimand. The Saeima morality nightmare in action." I. Ratinika is referring to the amendments to the Education Law (*Izglītības likums*) adopted by the Saeima in Summer 2015, which specify that the education system must ensure morality in education in accordance with the values contained in and protected by the Latvian Constitution, with marriage and family among these. This discussion was prompted by an excerpt of Agnese Krivade's poem "māja" ("home") (from the anthology *Bērnība* (*Childhood*). Published by Neputns, 2007), which twice contains a rude Russian swear word. As poet and editor of the book, Jānis Rokpelnis, explained afterwards in analyzing this situation, A. Krivade's poem can be considered a prayer spoken in the language of outcasts. The swear word used in it is also used in the Bible. According to Rokpelnis: "This poem is a prayer about all outcasts, expressed in their language. What does "b\*\*g" mean?" It means – "m\*\*ka" ("wh\*re"). The words "m\*\*ka", "m\*\*cība" ("wh\*re", "wh\*ring") are used as stylistically neutral words not as swear words in the newest Bible translation. Secondly, art and aesthetics has nothing to do with morality," (LSM 2015).

In connection with this, the Ministry of Education and Science stated that the use of specific learning materials during class is based on the professional choice and responsibility of every educator. These discussions, however, continued, as a similar situation had also occurred with the unofficial censorship of materials used for literature classes when VISC requested that excerpts of specific literary works, as well as individual words and phrases, be removed from two textbooks prepared by the publishing house Pētergailis. For example, in 2012, complaints had arisen regarding several of P. Brūveris' poems, and, likewise, it was

Understanding different layers in the lexicon and the morality of education

not desirable to include excerpts of the R. Blaumanis' story *Velniņi* (*Little devils*) in learning materials, nor anecdotes about priests. VISC denied that it had interfered in the work of the books' editors, but the Association of Teachers of Latvian Language and Literature (Latviešu valodas un literatūras skolotāju asociācija) pointed to a clearly felt tendency of tailoring the content of educational materials to the subjective opinions of parents (Kusiņa 2015).

It is a generally known fact that the use of slang in everyday life is evidence of a low level of intelligence and culture. Therefore, slang should be avoided in speaking with the press, in everyday official communication, and in other communication or speech situations. However, very often a slang style is used for artistic reasons, having even a poetic (in this case – a “depoetic”) function. In this respect, the main evaluatory criterion is an artistically motivated updating of language in artwork. Along with stylistic expression, language used for such purposes also attains emotional expression – it shows an attitude towards this or that occurrence, provides an emotional assessment, and so on. The noticeable increase in the proportion of elements from conversational language can be considered a trend characteristic of the last twenty years. Additionally, in accordance with the present-day stylistic attitude, literary language norms also apply to scientific and business writing styles; however, in literature, journalism, and conversation, observing literary language norms is conditional. Therefore, elements of non-literary conversational language can be found in poetry, which is a component of literary style.

It is possible to learn about that which is unacceptable or unethical in society in several ways. One can, of course, pretend that these words do not exist in the language or that they are only used in the lexicon of *déclassé* members of society; however, these realizations and, most importantly, this understanding regarding that which is unethical or unacceptable can also be learned in high school literature class by evaluating and analyzing these words in context. To learn the difference between the wholesome and the unwholesome, as well as about the layers of non-literary language as a category – those words it is not accepted to mention in polite speech and which are labeled in the dictionary as *vulg.* (*vulgar*) or *vienk.* (*slang*) – can also be achieved in literature class.

### Language in commercials and the public space

Tiny things that drive one mad – this is how one could characterize the lack of understanding and heightened reaction by a part of society to some commercials. “Nā ču!” and “Ašā kabacnauda”<sup>4</sup>. The clear violations of spelling norms are received with nihilism in terms of Latvian language spelling rules.

<sup>4</sup> Both of these are non-standard spellings of terms reflecting their pronunciation in quick speech. “Nā ču!” is a quick pronunciation of, in standard spelling, “Nāc šurp!” (“Come over here!”) and “Ašā kabacnauda” is a quick pronunciation of, in standard spelling, “Ašā kabatas nauda” (“Quick pocket money”). In the latter example, in its incorrect non-standard spelling “kabacnauda”, it should be noted that in Latvian spelling the letter <c> has the pronunciation [ts].

Do mistakes always have  
the intended effect?

However, the producer Līga Dalmane from telecommunications company LNT explained the spelling “Ašā kabacnauda” used in their advert as a conscious choice, as the use of the incorrect “c” to spell the word was done so it could more easily be replaced with the euro symbol (€). The LNT specialists had not seen any risk of violating the State Language Law by using this marketing tactic. At the same, language specialists feel that this is “petty hooliganism in language” and in this way society grows nihilistic concerning certain types of rules (Āboliņa 2010).

The search for a name for a new cream-based product unfolded with a great deal of publicity and the broad involvement from society. Following an everyday language use consultation, a news correspondent was told that the word *krēmelis* is derived from the word *krēms* (cream, as in skin or face cream), but that *krējumelis* would be the form derived from *krējums* (cream, as in the dairy product). The news agency reported that the linguists had already made a decision and that henceforth this cream-based product would be called *krējumelis*. No amount of explanations or clarifications would suffice concerning the fact the linguists had not recommended anything, but had instead explained the morphological word formation process and that the final word should be given to dairy producers, food experts, and terminologists. As a result, an unexpectedly active discussion erupted across society concerning the name of this cream-based product. The LVA also asked members of society to offer their own versions of names for this product, and there was a large response; the LVA received approximately 100 proposals, including: *krējumveidis*, *sviestveidis*, *pienveidis*, *krēmaizdars*, *greilis*, and *taupkrējums*.

Unfortunately, in discussing the way in which this problem is represented in the mass media, it is also necessary to talk about the interpretation of what linguists say, i.e., one must consider the carelessness of journalists, the lack of professionalism, and insufficient basic knowledge about language. Thus, not investigating who said what, the opinion of the LZA Terminology Commission (Terminoloģijas komisija; LZA = Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmija = Latvian Academy of Sciences), as reported by the mass media, which stated that none of the words developed to refer to this cream-based product were appropriate, was attributed to the LVA, even though the LVA has nothing to do with approving new terms. Based on this information, the LVA was identified as the main decision maker and it had to answer countless “why?” questions from residents and journalists. In this case, the carelessness of journalists confused readers, and did not expand understanding about this situation and the work done by linguists.

Fast forward in time though, and it is important to note that there have been *no changes on the cream front*: initially it was announced that on September 1, 2012 in accordance with the corresponding European Commission regulation it would no longer be permitted to use the term *krējuma izstrādājums* (cream-based product). Now the term has been extended indefinitely. There is no new designation for this product and none has been offered by dairy specialists, the Food and Veterinary Service (Pārtikas un veterinārais dienests), or the Ministry of Agri-

Discussions about neologisms

No changes on the cream front

culture (Zemkopības ministrija). “Currently, the old term for a mixture of plant fats and cream, *krējuma izstrādājums*, continues to function on Latvia’s linguistic menu, but the new term is still awaiting its craftsman” (Vulāne 2012, 87). However, eventually the new regulations will come into force and so one would sincerely hope that a week before this event, linguists are not tormented and their words are not up for interpretation again.

### Language events popular in society

#### The Word, Non-Word, and Expression of the Year

One of the regular events, in which society is involved with respect to resolving issues related to language is the annual competition organized by the Latvian Language Development Group (Latviešu valodas attīstības kopa – LVAK) of the Rīga Latvian Association (Rīgas Latviešu biedrība) to select the Word, Non-Word, and Expression of the Year. This survey has been carried out in Latvia since 2003. Its annual summaries can be found at the homepage of the competition organizers (available at: <https://lvak.wordpress.com/about/>) where in addition to information on this competition various materials and articles on language, explanations of terms, and interviews can be found. It has become customary for this event to occur in January of each year. Those entering submissions must indicate the wider context in which the word or expression was heard and also identify its author. Though submissions can be sent throughout the year, the survey results are announced at a special conference in January.

LVAK organizes this event in cooperation with the Latvian Writers’ Union (Latvijas Rakstnieku savienība) and the LZA Terminology Commission. The role of this survey is “to prompt a multifaceted, ongoing, and well-argued dialogue between language users, linguists, sociolinguists, writers and publicists, teachers, students, mass media sources, government institutions, public figures, publishers, terminologists, editors, translators, and lexicographers. It is important for the development of our language that every valuable and interesting observation (positive as well as negative) arrive at the panel [evaluating] the surveys” (<https://lvak.wordpress.com/gada-vards-nevards-teiciens/>).

For the more than ten years since the survey began, residents have been able to send their submissions for the three nomination categories: Word of the Year, Non-Word of the Year, and Expression of the Year<sup>5</sup> (Table 26).

The Word of the Year: the most striking word formed according to the rules of Latvian word formation, which during that year has been heard for the first time, gained or regained its popularity, or been used for the first time in this year with a new or unique meaning.

<sup>5</sup> In Latvian, “gada vārds” (“word of the year”), “gada nevārds” (“non-word of the year”), and “gada spārnotais teiciens” (lit. “winged” – “expression of the year” – the expression selected each year is in some way especially noteworthy or memorable and can be either good or bad from the perspective of language use).

The Non-Word of the Year: the most striking example of a badly formed or needlessly borrowed word, which in the year in question has appeared or noticeably spread, or an already known word widely used during the year with an incorrect or needlessly warped meaning (for example, patterned after use in another language).

The Expression of the Year: the most striking or strangest expression used or especially noticed in society during the year.

| Survey year | Word of the Year                                                                  | Non-Word of the Year                                                  | Expression of the year                                                |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2003        | zīmols ( <i>brand</i> )                                                           | eiro ( <i>euro</i> )                                                  | "Zelta rokas"                                                         |
| 2004        | mēstule ( <i>spam</i> )                                                           | māsterplāns ( <i>master plan</i> )                                    | "Valsts deg zilās ugunīs"                                             |
| 2005        | smacenis ( <i>smog</i> )                                                          | centrs ( <i>center</i> )                                              | "Vanags noknāba cālīti"                                               |
| 2006        | draugoties ( <i>to friend on social media</i> )                                   | hendlings ( <i>handling</i> )                                         | "Paņēma un uzmeta"                                                    |
| 2007        | ēnstrādnieks ( <i>illegally employed person [lit. shadow worker]</i> )            | siera produkts ( <i>cheese product</i> )                              | "Bojāts horizontālais taimkods"                                       |
| 2008        | talkot ( <i>to participate in the annual national service day "Lielā talka"</i> ) | šis te... šo te... ( <i>this one here... that one there...</i> )      | "Pārāk liela cilvēcība sabiedrībai nav saprotama"                     |
| 2009        | glābējsilīte ( <i>baby box [lit. rescue cradle]</i> )                             | saīsināt ( <i>darbiniekus</i> ) ( <i>reduce (employees)</i> )         | "Un ko jūs saprotat ar politisku atbildību?"                          |
| 2010        | zibakcija ( <i>flash mob</i> )                                                    | pa lielam ( <i>generally</i> )                                        | "Krāniem un buldozeriem jāstrādā lidostā"                             |
| 2011        | staidzināt ( <i>to take for a walk</i> )                                          | konsolidēt ( <i>consolidate</i> )                                     | "Rīkojums Nr. 2"                                                      |
| 2012        | ziemotne ( <i>a bird's wintering place</i> )                                      | uzrunāt ( <i>problēmu</i> ) ( <i>address (a problem)</i> )            | "Vilks paziņoja, ka Lapsas sūdzība par Zaķa pārkāpumu tiks izskatīta" |
| 2013        | pašbilde ( <i>slang term</i> ) ( <i>selfie</i> )                                  | dīlot, dīlošana, dīls ( <i>to deal, dealing, a deal</i> )             | "Nākotne ir nākotnes cilvēku rokās!"                                  |
| 2014        | ausīši                                                                            | aplikācija ( <i>application</i> ) ( <i>in reference to software</i> ) | "Nē, tā es neesmu." – "Tu zini, kas es esmu!?"                        |
| 2015        | atkraste                                                                          | uzstādījumi ( <i>settings</i> )                                       | "Salauztā slotaskāta krimināllieta"                                   |

Table 26. The winners of the annual competition for Word, Non-Word, and Expression of the Year.  
Statistics: <https://lvak.wordpress.com/gada-vards-nevards-teiciens/>

**The goals of the  
competition**

It is interesting, or perhaps telling, that every year this competition receives at least twice as many non-words (unpleasant, unwelcome, incorrectly formed words, barbarisms) than ones which one would want to recognize as the most sonorous words or as truly Latvian, unimpeachable neologisms. As noted by V. Feists, an LVAK participant, translator, and editor of LVAK.wordpress.com, the Word of the Year competition has two functions: to show what language is like and to allow one to think about what it could be like: clear, and perhaps a bit clearer – at least in the press and in the public statements made by authorities and businesses (Feists 2015).

With the passage of time, several different opinions have established themselves in society regarding this event: it should in no way be seen as the opinion of all of Latvia's society and as a norm accepted officially by linguists, as even in the words announced based on the surveys one can see contradictions; the current non-word has become an indisputable part of our present-day lexicon. This has happened, for example, with the word *eiro* (*euro*), which in 2003 was declared the non-word of the year due to the fact that it is indeclinable<sup>6</sup>. One should remember that at precisely this time active discussions were ongoing across society regarding which word should be adopted into the Latvian grammatical system: the indeclinable *eiro* or the declinable *eira*? The choice of the 2005 non-word *centrs* (*center*) is similarly befuddling: an internationalism with many meanings and already in wide use was declared to be unnecessarily borrowed and too widespread in the language. As a result of this action, has the use of *centrs* in the many compounds in which it exists (culture, recreation, leisure, business, sports, and other centers) in any way decreased?

In 2010, *zibakcija* (*flash mob*) was selected as the Word of the Year; however, at the 24.08.2010 meeting of the LZA Terminology Commission, this word was turned down, and instead such words as *pēksnis* (the participants could also be *pēkšņotāji*), *pārsteiga*, *ņūklis* were recognized as successful neologisms. With the passage of time, it can be seen that *zibakcija* has certainly established itself and deserved its selection as Word of the Year, while *pēksnis*, *pārsteiga*, and *ņūklis* exist as a testament to their time period and only in the records of the LZA.

**Some words thrive,  
others disappear**

Many of the Words of the Year have not become a regular part of the Latvian lexicon, for example, *smacenis*, *staidzināt*, *ziemotne*, while in place of the proposed form *mēstules* the majority of users unfortunately continue to favor the English-derived *spams*. This once again demonstrates that it is not possible to force something onto language users: if society accepts a proposed word and brings it into use, then it becomes a neologism. If not, then it remains “frozen” in the category of potential neologisms. Of the other Words of the Year, some are

<sup>6</sup> In Latvian, words ending in *-o* are not declineable according to the noun case system of the language. This is an inconvenience, especially for a word denoting currency, as the noun cases describe the relationships between the components of the sentence and their connection to the verb of the sentence, among other functions.

widely used in society such as *zīmols*, *talkot*, *glābējsilīte*, the aforementioned *zibakcija*, occasionally *ēnstrādnieks*, and *draugoties* is also heard; however, the latter, possibly due to a decrease in the popularity of the social network Draugiem.lv and an increase in popularity of other social networks, has lost some of its relevance of late.

As acknowledged by the event organizers, society takes an active role in this survey; for example, in 2015, in announcing the 2014 winners for each category, approximately five hundred submissions had been evaluated. “Somewhere between a paradox and extremes, brightness and drabness – the language lives, Latvians don’t stay quiet. As society’s response is large, every year there is no shortage of submissions in any category.” (Feists 2015).

Analyzing the submissions, it can be concluded, that in all categories one can see fresh as well as already observed trends. This can be explained by readers’ lack of knowledge concerning the competing submissions of the previous year as well as by a certain amount of subjectivity where for every entrant their own Word and Non-Word of the Year seems not only special, but also certainly better than those of other entrants; for that reason, they submit the same words again the following year. However, in any case, this competition has shown that it has long-term viability and has become a popular tradition, while from the perspective of language policy, any initiative from society to discuss language, its euphony and purity, is to be encouraged.

### **Current events in language and the work of the commission of experts**

The work of two VVC commissions – the Calendar Name Expert Commission (Kalendārvārdu ekspertu komisija) and the Latvian Language Expert Commission (Latviešu valodas ekspertu komisija) also testifies to the involvement of society in resolving language issues (Baltiņš, Liepa, Rūmniece 2016, 130).

The renewed membership of the VVC Latvian Language Expert Commission (LVEK) was confirmed in 2010. The Commission includes 22 linguists from various institutions as well as representatives of linguistic subdisciplines, educators, education experts, and terminologists. Meetings take place once a month.

Reviewing the work of the LVEK, specifically the solutions and decisions with respect to the language questions discussed, it can be seen that the Commission works more with the questions which are posed by interested individuals to LVA consultants as well as to the VVC; more rarely reviewed were matters submitted by linguists concerning the proactive resolution of particular language issues. Therefore, the job (and opportunity) of the linguists’ commission is not make standardization decisions, but instead to suggest the most optimal solutions for Latvian based on expert opinion. In addition, commission members work within the limits set by their other responsibilities, as the time allotted for attending meetings as well as reviewing submitted materials can only come after the completion of the responsibilities associated with the commission members’ primary work.

**The Latvian Language  
Expert Commission**

**Issues to be resolved by  
the Commission**

Questions resolved by the Commission can be organized as follows by content:

- the writing of foreign words and the spelling system<sup>7</sup>,
- the use of abbreviations/initials and pronunciation,
- the use/meaning of specific single and compound words in Latvian,
- questions of morphology or phonetics (the traditional sensitive question of consonant change in genitive forms, the use of the narrow/broad *e* vowel<sup>8</sup>),
- broader questions proposed by the Commission itself or officially submitted by the State Language Center.

Another result, following several Commission meetings and following consultations with Latvia's civil servants at the EU, is the more precise and renewed representation of European Union member state region names in Latvian. This task was delegated to the Commission by the State Language Center, so that it could be included in the work to develop the EU's common statistical territorial unit classification (NUTS). The Commission also received and reviewed questions from individual linguists.

#### The Calendar Name Expert Commission

The VVC Calendar Name Commission met in 2011 and 2014. This commission contains linguists who specialize in questions pertaining to personal names, as well as members from the Civil Registry Department of the Ministry of Justice and administrative specialists from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior; it approves decisions based on consensus. In 2011, 12 women's and 9 men's names were added to the list maintaining the earlier principles of personal name choice, which was based on a name's origin, meaning, and euphony, the frequency of its use and stability as well as its traditionalness and correspondence to Latvian naming traditions (VVC 2014).

#### Trends in selecting personal names

Every now and again – especially with respect to name days<sup>9</sup> – personal names are actively discussed in the mass media. This issue has always been important for Latvians. In Summer 2015, the portal *nra.lv* published a list of the rarest and strangest personal names (NRA 2015). The following names are some examples (each name was registered once): Zieds, Liedars, Vilks, Lācis, Rubenis, Zaķe, Labīte, Rudens, Mudiņš, Pāparde (boy's name), Žikivators, Pirāts, Tarzāns, Barons, Baronesa, Klusums, Kosmoss, Orions, Zvaigzne. Then there are also the shortened forms: Jancis, Jančuks<sup>10</sup>. One wonders how these children will feel when they are adults. Have the parents considered how Pirāts, Prezidents, or

<sup>7</sup> In the Latvian spelling system, foreign words and names must be rewritten according to Latvian spelling rules.

<sup>8</sup> In Latvian, the vowel written as <e> or <ē> (in its long form) has two different pronunciations, for historical reasons. "Narrow e" (*šaurais e*, in Latvian) is pronounced [e]. "Broad e" (*platais e*, in Latvian) is pronounced [æ].

<sup>9</sup> As is also the case in a number of the countries near Latvia, there is a tradition of "name days" in Latvia where each date on the calendar is assigned a certain number of names. The date with one's name on the calendar is called a "name day" and is celebrated somewhat like a birthday.

<sup>10</sup> *Jancis* and *Jančuks* are diminutive forms of the proper name *Jānis* (John). It would be unusual for the diminutive forms to be used as the basic proper name for a person – in English, akin to someone being given the name "Johnny" on their birth certificate.

Tarzāns will be treated in school. Can you imagine a situation where a government official, manager, or director could have the name Jančuks? These are just a few examples – every reader can familiarize themselves with the expanded list on the portal. There is no law that limits the imagination and irresponsibility of parents in this respect.

Latvians like untraditional and unusual names, which is a naming habit that society is used to; however, emotional discussions begin when a person with an untraditional name wants very much that their name be included in the calendar, but...the calendar is not limitless in size.

The Commission has not eliminated names during recent years from the list of calendar names, because it feels that in this way harm could be done to the traditions of the Latvian people and their non-material cultural heritage (for more on the placement of personal names on the calendar see Baltiņš 2016, 165-177).

Since May 22, 2014, when the VVC Calendar Name Expert Commission meeting took place, there has no longer been a division between official and unofficial names on the calendar name list. Instead there is the Latvian traditional calendar name list and the expanded name day list, which contains almost all suggested personal names. Currently, the Latvian traditional culture name list contains approximately 1000 names, but the expanded list has 5870 names (Rutka 2016).

## 8.7. The role of mass media sources in Latvian language maintenance

From time to time in the press and on internet portals a language flash glimmers for a moment – that is to say, an explanation of or discussion about a particular new word, new term, or foreign word. For example, on October 8, 2010, *Latvijas Avīze* announced that a grandchild's new outfit could be called *bodijas* (following the recommendation from the relevant terminologists); that linguists suggest that in Latvian it is better to say *sorosieši* rather than *sorosoīdi*<sup>11</sup>; and that a clarification was given with respect to country names – the country of Georgia's Latvian name *Gruzija* would remain unchanged.

In 2012 and 2013, topical questions of Latvian language use are also discussed on the Radio Latvia program *Kā labāk dzīvot* (*How to live better*): during a live broadcast the specifics of the LVA's work were explained and answers were given to listener questions concerning grammar, vocabulary, and stylistics. In 2012, the sources writing most actively about this were *Latvijas Avīze* and NRA, which publish several dozen “language minutiae” – language consultations regarding topical language practice questions prepared by LVA linguists. The linguists explain which is correct: *šī gada* or *šā gada* (*this year*), how to end a letter: *ar cieņu* or *cienā* (*respectfully*); *paraolimpisks* or *paralimpisks* (*Paralympic*), *tā sāls* or *tas*

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<sup>11</sup> These words refer to people seen as being associated with the Soros Foundation and its policies.

*sāls* (*that salt*); they also explain the representation of proper nouns and issues relating to spelling. NRA divides these mini-consultations into minutiae related to linguistic “beautification” (e.g., what is the correct spelling, *hohoba* or *jojoba* (or maybe *džodžoba*?) and the abbreviation *spa*) and language “gourmets” (those interested in the beautiful details of language). However, the most important realization is that language has many possibilities for expression, so let’s not argue about minutiae!

For language, in the words of I. Kolmane, “all types of concerns are of importance. [...] Language issues can be almost physically painful for a person, a person’s relationship with their own language is a delicate matter, all types of relationship models are possible here.” (Kolmane 2012). This is evidenced by the sometimes time-consuming though not always necessary discussions in which Latvian language speakers spend a lot of time and energy in completely unnecessary arguments and in search of a single, unified truth.

Language has parallel varieties, which is why normative sources do not contain references indicating whether a particular form is more desirable or recommended. As a result, the choice is dependent on each language speaker’s habits, linguistic style, and stylistic sense. Latvian is colorful, rich, and contemporary, which is why everyone can find in it their opportunities for expression.

These are also offered by the new publication *Ir. Domuzīme*, which produced four issues in 2015. “The dash (“domuzīme”) exists between “before” and “after”, between the past and present, in other words, it is the space in which a person’s life is spent. To exist within it means to have the chance to understand one’s experience. For that reason, *Domuzīme* will remind [readers] of past words, which are also meaningful today. Follow the word and keep [others] to their word!” (*Domuzīme* 2015, 1). The magazine’s creators have promised to compile articles, to delve into and loosen up literary as well as social processes, and evaluate that which has already been accomplished. In the four issues published in 2015, one can read prose and poetry, opinion and interviews, discussions, reviews and journalism, and a fairly meaningful space is also left specifically for language. “A person’s life exists in language, which we use, as we are used to doing so, and for everyday life, the language environment shapes our thinking and perception of the world,” note the magazine’s creators J. Vādons, M. Mintaurs, R. Kalpiņa un O. Zebris (*Domuzīme* 2015a, 1). The magazine also analyzes processes occurring within Latvian, for example, linguist A. Lauzis in issue 4 of the magazine includes a piece with an optimistic and at the same time calming headline “Pagrimuma latviešu valodā nav” (“There is no decline in Latvian”). There really is no decline, language evolves, every language speaker feels this, while written confirmation of this can be found in the wide-ranging discussions and articles about language correctness and culture in the mass media.

In summary, one must conclude that there are relatively few discussions about language quality issues in the press. As indicated by I. Druviete, two stereotypes dominate reader opinions: Latvian is poor and polluted, and a shift towards for-

eign words is occurring. The most widespread claims are "Isn't it unimportant what language one speaks?", "It is not possible to express oneself as precisely and colorfully as in another language", "Oh, get out of here all of you with your Latvian!" For now, one cannot say that Latvian, as an element of collective identity, is losing its significance, though demonstrative nihilism is increasing among people, perhaps under the influence of the economic crisis (Druvieta 2010a, 130). At the same time, in considering language culture, the older generation will never be indifferent to how the younger generation speaks and so – every twenty years or so – the unending intergenerational conflict continues concerning how people currently speak and how this was not always so, and why are the linguists staying silent..? Therefore, without denying ideas concerning sometimes misunderstood democracy and freedom of speech, something, which would be more important than criticism is an individual understanding of national and cultural values, as well as a political and civic responsibility for one's statements to society.

## CONCLUSION

The indicators describing the language situation in present-day Latvia correspond in large part to the results set out in the state language policy positions and action plans, while also pointing the way to future opportunities, directions and actions. However, outside of the small increase in Latvian language use in several particular domains, in practice these principles are observed at an insufficient level. In the language policy implemented in Latvia, two aspects are emphasized that also touch upon language use in everyday life: securing the use of Latvian and its coexistence with various minority languages that historically live alongside Latvian, and society's multilingualism as a prerequisite for competitiveness in the EU (ES valodas politika kontekstā). According to survey statistics, in Latvia's society the significance of Latvian in its role as the state language – and also multilingualism – is understood at least on a declarative level. However, ignoring the slight increase in Latvian language use in individual sociolinguistic domains, these principles are followed at an insufficient level with respect to language use in society.

How has the language situation changed in the last ten years? The answer to this question must be found by analyzing the situation of language acquisition and use. The sociolinguistic studies conducted by the LVA confirm the well-known fact that formal education is the most effective way of learning Latvian or foreign languages; proficiency among young people is the highest, i.e., almost all of Latvia's young people speak Latvian and their proficiency level is the highest compared to members of older generations. At the same time, with respect to foreign language acquisition, the following trends can be observed: English language proficiency is increasing, proficiency in other foreign languages (e.g., German, French) is decreasing; proficiency in the other widely-learned foreign language in Latvia – Russian – is stable in the middle and older generation, but the number of individuals learning the language has slightly decreased among young people and their proficiency level is no longer as high as that of other generations. Young people are continuing to improve and wish to continue to improve their proficiency in Latvian more often than individuals surveyed from other age groups. Positive changes can be seen in the methods employed for language acquisition and further development of proficiency; an increasing number of survey respondents do these things informally either at their work place, in communication with their clients while at work, speaking Latvian in various everyday situations and with friends, and also while accessing various mass media sources.

Opportunities for Latvian language acquisition are guaranteed in various ways and for various education levels. Latvian is studied not just in schools. Responsible institutions offer and guarantee language acquisition opportunities for a very diverse target audience, which includes parents, teachers, members of ethnic minorities, third country nationals, asylum seekers, job seekers, and others. However, Latvian language use in practice cannot be guaranteed by any Latvian language teacher or course organizer. This is influenced by the linguistic attitude of the learner and their surroundings as well as the linguistic behavior of Latvia's society. If in a shop, on a bus, on the street, and in any other everyday communication situation, Latvians themselves do not use Latvian with individuals who know, are learning, or wish to speak Latvian, then the trends for Latvian language use will at best remain unchanged. In Latvia, every government official, worker, journalist, salesperson, and so on who, due to a misunderstood sense of tolerance or just through not wishing to spend a few seconds of their time speaking more slowly, clearly, and simply to help their interlocuter and give them the happiness of speaking Latvian, increases the use of Russian in the linguistic environment.

What is the government's role and what can it do to ensure use of Latvian? First of all, it can do so by strengthening the legal position of the values and principles of state language policy to specify the priority of Latvian in all sociolinguistic domains where it is important to guarantee its use: in government administration, education (all levels and phases), in connection with essential services provided to society (including in the private business sector), in culture, and in the mass media; and also by guaranteeing government support for the individuals working in each domain so they are able to follow the principles of state language policy.

The most complicated point exists within every individual's language choice and language use habits. These are influenced by personal experience, proficiency, views, and attitude, and come into contact with each other in the common language space. Two languages are actively used in Latvia's language space: Latvian, which is the only official language, national symbol, and one of the elements supporting a sense of belonging to the nation; and Russian, which due to historical reasons and its economic value is a powerful competing language with significant (and not just) political support from Russia. The sociolinguistic domain in which Russian is manifesting itself most strongly are the mass media, especially television; the responsible government institutions have not, for now, been able to design and implement requirements that would lead to and secure an expansion of the use of Latvian in this domain. The limited capacity of television in Latvia is also a hindrance, as it does not allow for the guarantee of the qualitative and diverse programming in Latvian necessary to satisfy demand. As a result, the popularity of Russian television channels is increasing in Latvia and Latvians too choose to watch these channels increasingly often. The government's ability to ensure the dominance of Latvian in the mass media, as well as access to these media (especially television) across the entire territory of the country, will certainly influence the language situation in Latvia.

Latvian language use is directly associated with the quality of language proficiency. Research into the language situation demonstrates that the next phase has begun – the further development of language proficiency. Another meaningful component is the opportunity and the desire to speak Latvian. The study concludes that even in government institutions where communication should only be in Latvian, approximately one fifth of members of the ethnic minority community who begin a conversation in Latvian receive a response in Russian. Why? This situation is encouraged by the continued good Russian language proficiency of Latvia's residents, commonly held beliefs in society, and engrained habits of communicating with those people who do not speak perfect Latvian but are learning. However, specifically everyday communication and a positive experience in communicating in Latvian is the best stimulus for wanting to speak Latvian. Proficiency in Latvian should not be necessary only for receiving a particular certification. It should be an integral part of everyday life and also an indicator of belonging to the country and society. This study shows that requirements, responsibilities, and rights with respect to language issues are sufficiently clear to society and are formally observed. However, this does not guarantee the formation of a unified society. The *Guidelines for State Language Policy 2015-2020* have specifically identified a direction for further work – ensuring the participation of society. This can be considered the most ambiguous and complicated direction for implementing policy – however, it is also currently its most vital one.



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Latviešu valodas aģentūra  
Lāčplēša iela 35-5, Rīga, LV-1011  
[www.valoda.lv](http://www.valoda.lv)

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