

Chapter

3

National Integration and Social Cohesion

Introduction

As noted in the 1990 global **Human Development Report**, “human development is a process of enlarging people’s choices.” These choices pertain not only to the economic and political realms, but also to each person’s cultural, religious and linguistic identity or identities. In Latvia, as in all modern societies, a person has not one, but several identities. For example, a person’s identity may consist of several aspects — woman, Latvian, Riga inhabitant, Catholic, student, European and others. Not all these categories are as monolithic as they might first appear, because identities often overlap and merge with each other. Which of one’s many identities is dominant at a given time is often determined by the environment and living conditions. For successful human development, an individual must be given wide opportunities for choosing when and to what extent to stress an ethnic or any other identity, to practise her culture or religion and to use her native language.

Human development often entails the narrowing of differences — between backward and booming regions, between levels of development in urban and rural areas, between the rich and the poor, and between men’s and women’s socio-economic conditions and life opportunities. In the realm of culture, religion and language, human development requires preserving and fostering diversity as a factor that enriches society. For diversity to promote harmony and not social strife, it is essential to strengthen common values and interests. The strengthening of common values and interests is commonly known as integration.

The political, cultural or social integration of society occurs when various groups discover or create common values and interests over time. Democratic integration — the kind that conforms to the principles of human development — is a process of interaction between various groups in society, not the submission of the weak to the powerful or forced assimilation. If, in the course of integration, inadequate attention is paid to the preservation of other cultures, conflict can erupt and society can

become more uniform, and in a cultural sense, poorer.

Although integration (like tolerant co-existence and assimilation) may be spontaneous, more often it is the outcome of state policy, institutions, legislation and programmes. The type of integration in which society has a largely passive role, in which the *state* actively integrates various social groups, does not fully conform to the basic principles of human development. Successful human development requires broad public participation.

The result of democratic integration is the emergence in society of a new, broader sense of belonging and loyalty alongside diverse cultural identities. Democratic integration in the Latvian context means movement towards a wider sense of belonging which could be called the *Latvian political nation*. In such a model of society, a central place in the value system is the existence and development of an independent, democratic state.

In those countries without “ethnofederalism” along the lines of Belgium, Canada and Switzerland, integration usually takes place on the basis of a single language. Given that Latvia is a unified territory and Latvian is the state language, it follows that democratic integration should take place on the basis of the Latvian language, it should lead to a society with universal knowledge of the Latvian (as a native or a second) language. However, in this process of integration it is important to preserve and protect cultural differences and the languages of other nationalities and to avoid forced assimilation.

This model could be termed a *national state with a multicultural society*: national in the sense that a condition of integration is one state language and a unified territory, and multicultural in that there is no common religion, there are schools with different languages of instruction and conditions are created for the development of all cultures.

It is instructive to conceptualize possible futures for Latvia because such models can serve as points of reference and orientation. However, current opportunities are determined not only by the actions of government and society, but also by recent history. Contemporary processes of social in-

tegration in Latvia are difficult to evaluate without reference to the situation in the mid-eighties.

Like other Soviet-type societies, Latvian society was characterized by powerful control and weak self-regulation. A culture of public debate could not develop because of the prevailing distrust and lack of social solidarity. Real economic and social differences were hidden and needs were artificially unified. Soviet ideologues strove to popularize the existence of imaginary communities (for example, the Soviet nation, the proletariat as the vanguard of progress, the leading class of socialist society etc.). It is important to note that the trend of Soviet society towards greater homogeneity had nothing in common with integration — homogenization was a precondition for social control.

The development of Latvian society also had its own specific characteristics related to the consequences of immigration in the 1960s and 1970s. A large number of people migrated to Latvia during this period, people whose values and understanding of history and inter-ethnic relations were at variance with views prevailing among Latvians. Often, these people and their children did not learn Latvian and their communication with Latvians was largely limited to the work place; they maintained the models of behaviour to which they had become accustomed. This period in Latvia saw the rapid development of a dual society marked not by living “together,” but rather “side-by-side”. Inter-ethnic contradictions were largely latent. Some of these contradictions emerged during the transition, but powerful forces militating towards integration have also been at work.

To assess the pace of and prospects for inte-

gration in Latvia, it is necessary to analyze its different aspects — demographic, political, linguistic, cultural and psychological. It is also important to assess the influence on inter-ethnic relations and the process of integration of the broader socio-political situation in the country and the international context.

Demography and Identities in Latvia

As pointed out in **Latvia Human Development Report 1995**, Latvia is a distinctly multi-ethnic society (see Map 3.1 and Table 3.1). According to the Population Register, in 1997 the population is 2.456 million, 56.7% of which are Latvians. Table 3.1 shows that after Latvians, the largest ethnic group is Russians with 742,000 or 30.2% of the total population in July 1997. Other groups forming over 1% of the population are Belarussians (4.2%), Ukrainians (2.8%), Poles (2.5%) and Lithuanians (1.4%). It is important to note that these figures are based on the ethnicity entry in passports. According to this Soviet-era practice, each person inherits an ethnicity from his parents and the official procedure for changing one's ethnicity is very complicated. When they reach the age of 16, children of mixed marriages must choose the ethnicity of one of their parents.

Data based on the ethnicity entry in passports cannot fully reflect the ethno-demographic situation in the country because Latvia has a very high incidence of intermarriage. In 1996, 34% of all marriages were ethnically mixed, ranging from approximately 17% for Latvians to about 90% for

Table 3.1

The Population of Latvia by Ethnicity and Citizenship, 1995 and 1997

Ethnicity	Citizens of Latvia		% of the Latvian Citizenry		Without Latvian Citizenship		% of All Non-Citizens		Total Residents		% of All Residents		% of Ethnicity with Citizenship	
	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997
Latvians	1397523	1382346	78.7%	78.2%	24464	11265	3.3%	1.6%	1421987	1393611	56.5%	56.7%	98.3%	99.2%
Russians	289106	288999	16.3%	16.3%	476790	452981	64.4%	65.9%	765896	741980	30.4%	30.2%	37.7%	38.9%
Belarussians	20971	20993	1.2%	1.2%	88151	83220	11.9%	12.1%	109122	104213	4.3%	4.2%	19.2%	20.1%
Ukrainians	4151	4739	0.2%	0.3%	65183	63434	8.8%	9.2%	69334	68173	2.8%	2.8%	6.0%	7.0%
Poles	39522	38975	2.2%	2.2%	25465	23207	3.4%	3.4%	64987	62182	2.6%	2.5%	60.8%	62.7%
Lithuanians	7253	12139	0.4%	0.7%	28454	22754	3.8%	3.3%	35707	34893	1.4%	1.4%	20.3%	34.8%
Jews	6828	6347	0.4%	0.4%	8456	6423	1.1%	0.9%	15284	12770	0.6%	0.5%	44.7%	49.7%
Roma	6794	7196	0.4%	0.4%	822	743	0.1%	0.1%	7616	7939	0.3%	0.3%	89.2%	90.6%
Germans	987	1129	0.1%	0.1%	2857	2460	0.4%	0.4%	3844	3589	0.2%	0.1%	25.7%	31.5%
Tatars	151	177	0.0%	0.0%	3402	3258	0.5%	0.5%	3553	3435	0.1%	0.1%	4.2%	5.2%
Estonians	1337	1382	0.1%	0.1%	1680	1426	0.2%	0.2%	3017	2808	0.1%	0.1%	44.3%	49.2%
Armenians	299	344	0.0%	0.0%	2240	2324	0.3%	0.3%	2539	2668	0.1%	0.1%	11.8%	12.9%
Others	1364	4012	0.1%	0.2%	12267	13991	1.7%	2.0%	13631	18003	0.5%	0.7%	10.0%	22.3%
Total	1776286	1768778			740231	687486			2516517	2456264			70.6%	72.0%

Belarussians, Ukrainians, Poles and Lithuanians. Taking into account the very large number of mixed marriages, many people in Latvia have an affiliation with more than one ethnic group. The ethnicity entry in passports restricts freedom of choice and forces people to choose a single identity. The ethnicity entry in passports contradicts human development, as it restricts people's opportunity to choose when and how to stress their ethnicity.

Moreover, the ethnicity entry does not reflect overlapping identities. At the end of 1996 a wide-ranging survey called *Baltic Barometer III* was conducted in all three Baltic states. Those surveyed were asked to describe themselves. The choices were ethnicity, city/locality, region, European, and Soviet. Each respondent was allowed to choose two characteristics. The majority of Latvians chose nationality as the primary characteristic, but city/locality as the second. The majority of non-Latvians chose city/locality first and then nationality. This suggests that identities overlap significantly at the local level, that Latvians and non-Latvians are united by a strong affiliation with their local communities.

Quite often ethnicity does not coincide with other ethno-demographic indicators, particularly native language. According to the 1989 census (where ethnicity was not recorded from passport entries, but was self-reported by respondents), the native language of 10.1% of the population of Latvia was different from their ethnicity. According to the Population Register, in 1997 over 120,000 people in Latvia use two languages in the home. The language skills of Latvia's population are examined in greater depth below. For now, it is sufficient to note that data on ethnicity in Latvia

oversimplify the ethno-demographic and linguistic situation.

Although the population of Latvia is not particularly religious (no more than 10% belong to a religious congregation), the ethno-cultural picture of Latvia is enriched by religious diversity. Among believers, those belonging to Catholic congregations are in the majority (approximately 40%), then Lutheran (approximately 30%), followed by Russian Orthodox (approximately 12%). There are about 5% Old Believers and Baptists, but the remainder belong to small confessions. Latvia may be regarded as a country with a high level of religious tolerance because there are no observable conflicts among the various confessions. It is not uncommon for members of one confession to attend services at the house of worship of another faith.

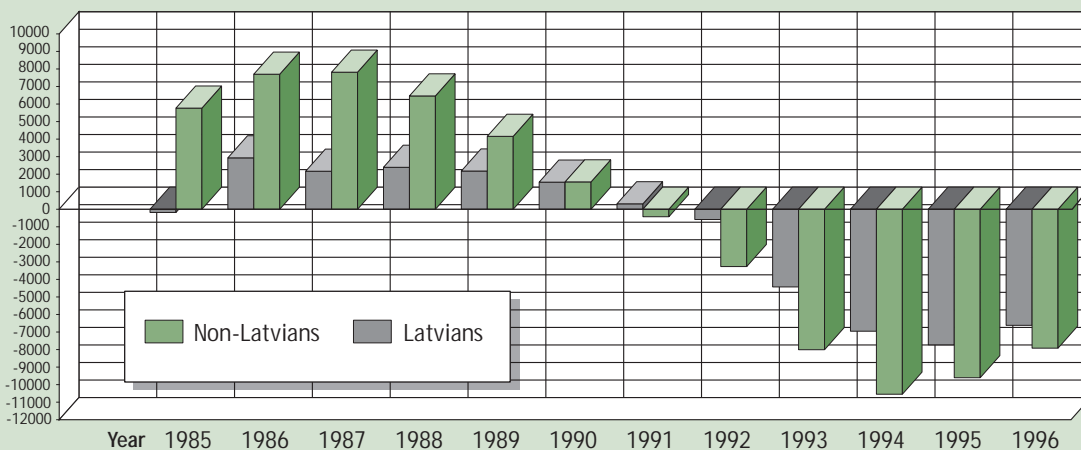
This altogether complex ethno-cultural and ethno-linguistic picture is slowly changing with demographic processes. As noted in **Latvia Human Development Report 1995**, since 1990 Latvia has witnessed significant out-migration, which reached a peak in 1992, when 47,000 more people left Latvia than arrived. Since then out-migration has slowed and the net outflow was only 7252 in 1996. Forecasts suggest that emigration will decrease in the future as well. In ethnic terms, all minorities (except the Roma or Gypsies) have decreased as a result of emigration, but Latvians have experienced a slight increase through repatriation from both east and west.

Although the ethnic situation is now little affected by migration, like other countries of the former communist bloc, Latvia is witnessing a deep demographic crisis. This crisis was described in de-

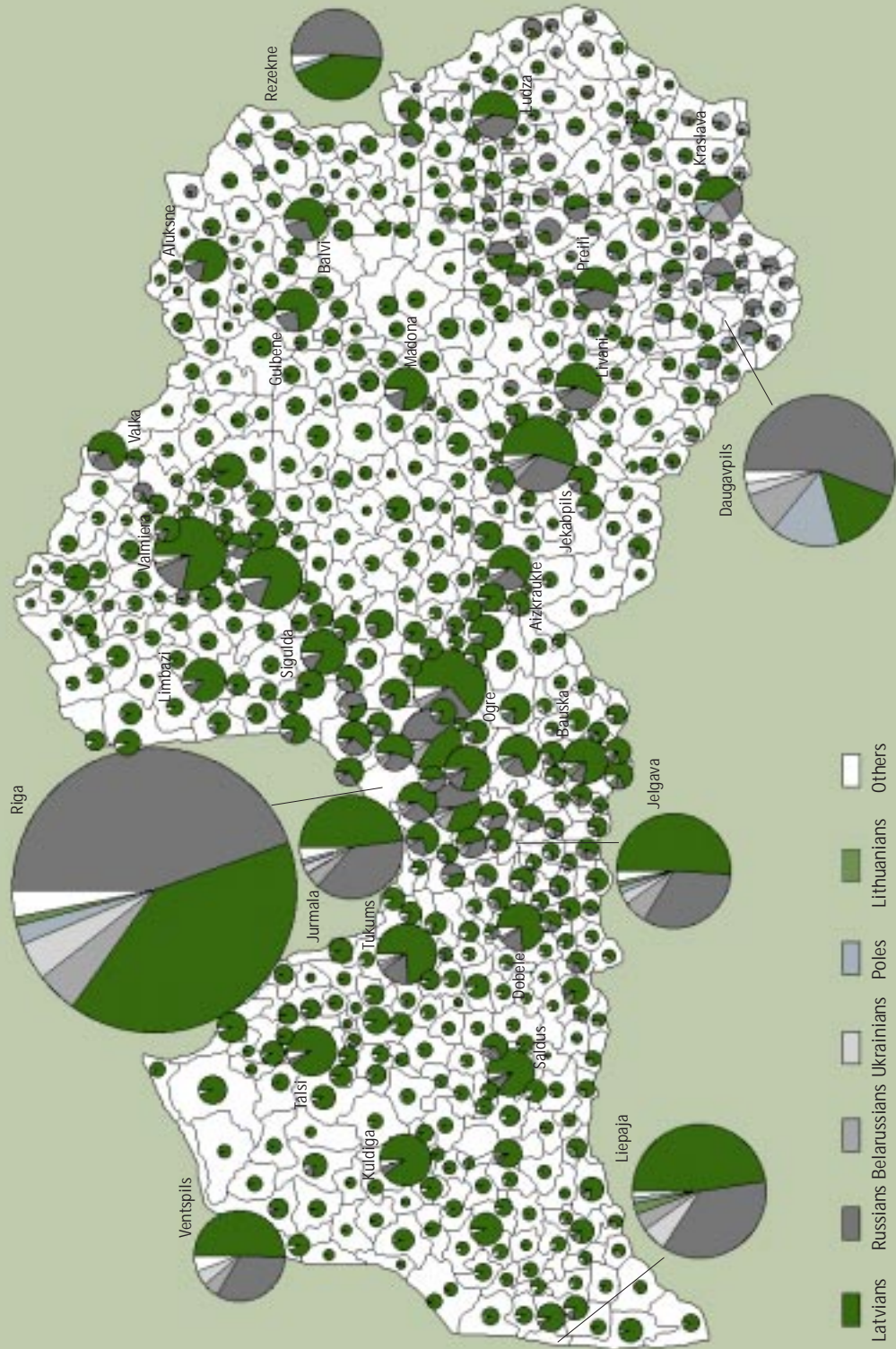
Figure 3.1

Rate of Natural Increase for Latvians and Non-Latvians, 1985-1996

Net birth and death rates



Map 3.1
Ethnic Distribution of the Population, 1997



tail in last year's **Report**. Thus, in 1996 for example, the birth-rate fell to below 8 births per thousand population, mortality rates are still very high and life expectancy, especially among males, is among the lowest in Europe. Although the birth rate continues to fall, mortality is not increasing but has fallen in the last two years from 16.3 to 13.7 per thousand.

Contrary to popular belief, Latvians have relatively higher demographic indicators than Russians and most other minorities (see Figure 3.1). Since the restoration of independence, the birth rate for Latvians has been higher than the national average and significantly exceeded the rate for Russians. Although Latvians have a slightly longer life expectancy than Russians (see **Latvia Human Development Report 1996**), the mortality rate among Latvians is slightly higher than among Russians because Latvians have a far more elderly age structure. It can be predicted that mortality rates for both Latvians and Russians will converge over time or will even be higher for Russians, because they have a lower life expectancy and the Russian population is no longer being rejuvenated through immigration. Forecasts suggest that the proportion of Latvians will slowly increase as a result of demographic processes and will reach 60% in about ten years.

Political Integration

Citizenship, Naturalization and Participation

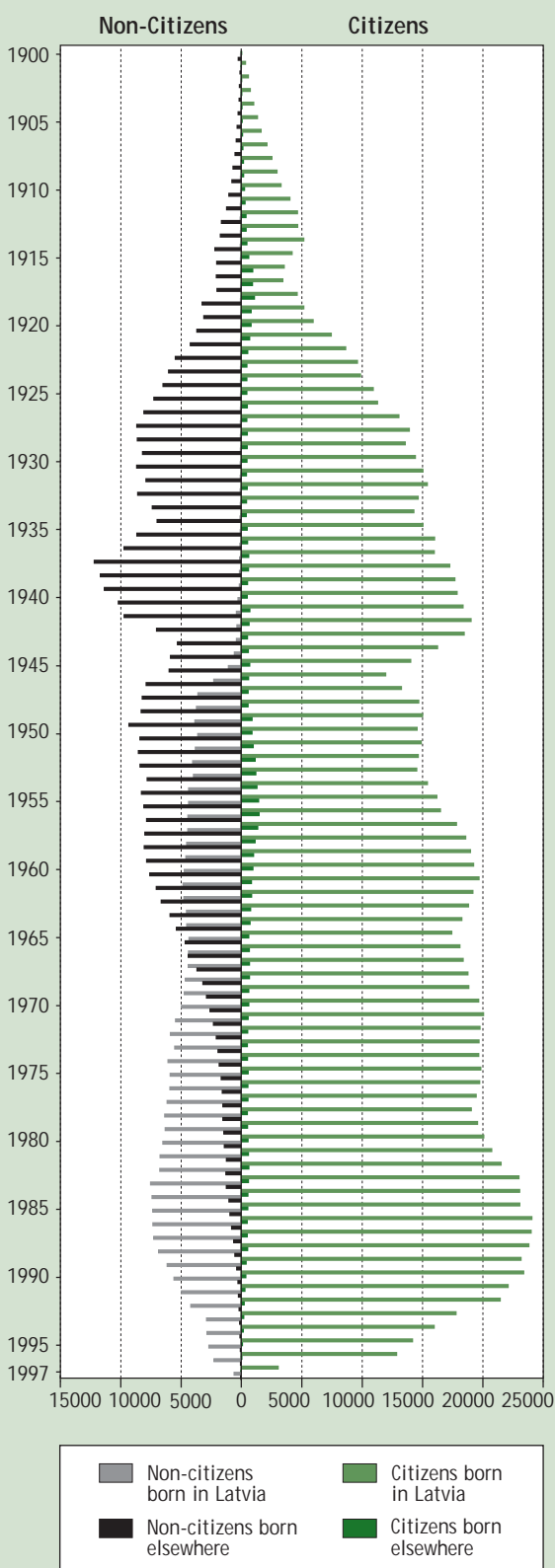
Political integration may be defined as the convergence of the socio-political values and interests of different groups of the population. Democratic political integration is also the process whereby differences in the rights and obligations of various groups diminish, whereby broad public participation in social life and government is strengthened over time.

The chapter on "Participation and Strengthening Civil Society" in last year's **Report** noted that "successful human development requires both strong vertical linkages between state institutions and society and diverse horizontal linkages" within society. The stronger these linkages are, the more integrated Latvian society will be. One of the most important vertical linkages is the institution of citizenship, which is a person's stable, legal bond with the state and one of the critical preconditions for political participation.

Since the division between citizens and non-citizens largely overlaps with ethnic differences, it follows that the resolution of the citizenship issue

Figure 3.2

Citizens and Non-Citizens by Year and Place of Birth



can profoundly affect national integration and the development of horizontal linkages in society. The granting of citizenship to non-citizens, i.e. naturalization, is linked not only to the political integration of society. Considering the requirements of the Citizenship Law, naturalization is also intimately linked to society's linguistic and socio-psychological integration as well.

In October 1991, not long after the restoration of independence, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia passed a resolution "On the Restoration of the Rights of Citizens of the Republic of Latvia and the Basic Regulations for Naturalization," which restored Latvian citizenship to those who had it in pre-war Latvia and to their direct descendants regardless of ethnicity. This law was a logical consequence of the principle of legal continuity of the Republic of Latvia.

However, there are many inhabitants who have not inherited Latvian citizenship. Table 3.1 shows that in 1997 there were 687,486 non-citizens in Latvia or 28% of the registered population. As the table also shows, over 98% of all non-citizens are non-Latvians, mainly Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians. Although a relatively large number of non-Latvians are citizens, the majority, 63.6%, are non-citizens. Approximately two-thirds of all non-citizens were born outside of Latvia and one-third within the territory of Latvia (see Figure 3.2).

Almost three years passed after the October 1991 resolution before the Latvian legislature (Saeima) passed a law setting out the procedure for obtaining citizenship through naturalization. The July 1994 Citizenship Law and its 1995 amendments (henceforth, the Citizenship Law) sparked off widespread debate in society, heated battles in Parliament, as well as heightened interest by foreign countries and international organizations. The law was a political compromise between those who opposed any naturalization and those who favoured a gradual and strictly controlled process.

The Citizenship Law stated that various categories of people that had not automatically inherited citizenship could obtain it simply by registering with the authorities: 1) Latvians and Livs; 2) women who had lost their citizenship in pre-war Latvia and their descendants; 3) persons who had undergone a full course of study with Latvian as the language of instruction or in the Latvian language section of a mixed school; and 4) children born in Latvia who, at the time of birth, had a parent with Latvian citizenship.

Children whose parents are both non-citizens are not automatically granted citizenship. This means that new non-citizens are still being born in

Latvia. Of all children born in 1995 whose parents were married (approximately 70%), 88% automatically became Latvian citizens, but 12% or 1608 were stateless. As a result of demographic trends, the proportion of new-born children that do not automatically become Latvian citizens is falling annually (see Figure 3.2). However, some 2000-3000 new non-citizens are born in Latvia every year. These children have no direct ties to the USSR and do not have the citizenship of any existing state. This fact is hard to reconcile with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which is binding on Latvia, Article 7 of which provides for the right of children to citizenship at birth, "in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless."

The Citizenship Law bars several categories of persons from applying for citizenship. Among these are those who acted against Latvian independence using anti-constitutional means; former employees of the USSR (LSSR) KGB or other security services; persons who, after 13 January 1991, worked against the Republic of Latvia as members of various organizations (these are named in the law) and others. In accordance with the Citizenship Law other non-citizens may apply for citizenship through naturalization. Applicants for naturalization must have lived in Latvia after 5 May 1990 for 5 years, and pass examinations demonstrating Latvian language proficiency and a basic knowledge of the Constitution, the Constitutional law, the words of the national anthem and Latvian history. However, not all may immediately apply for naturalization.

Various categories of residents were eligible for "extraordinary" naturalization from the day the law took effect. Among these were Latvians and Livs; persons who entered Latvia legally before 17 June 1940 and their descendants; residents of Latvia who were Lithuanian or Estonian citizens before the war and their descendants; the spouses of citizens and some other groups.

The majority of all non-citizens may apply for naturalization under the general procedure in accordance with a schedule or "window system" which began in 1996 and ends in 2003. According to the schedule, those born in Latvia may apply for naturalization before those born outside Latvia. In 1996, for example, applications were accepted from persons aged 16-20 and who were born in Latvia. This year, applicants must have been born in Latvia, but may be up to 25 years of age. The original idea behind the schedule was to ensure the smooth pace of naturalization and to avoid potential bottlenecks of applications that would overburden state institutions and create technical problems.

Although the Citizenship Law was passed in

Box 3.1**Minority Participation and Dialogue with the Government**

Non-Latvians form about 44% of the total population, 22% of the citizenry, but only 10% of Saeima deputies. At the municipal level minority representation is increasing in some places. For example, there was a threefold increase in the number of non-Latvian deputies in the Riga City Council after the local elections in March 1997. Statistics on the ethnic composition of executive bodies or the civil service are unavailable, but there is reason to believe that in most government institutions (except the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Transport), non-Latvians are under-represented, especially in higher positions.

This disproportion can partly be attributed to the fact that the majority of non-Latvians do not have citizenship and are therefore precluded from voting, being elected or holding many positions in public administration. Inadequate knowledge of the state language prevents many non-Latvian citizens from being eligible for employment in the state apparatus, while others have opted for private business. The low representation of minorities in elected bodies also reflects low levels of popular mobilization and participation (see last year's **Report**).

From the perspective of successful social integration and human development, the low level of minority representation is a negative factor. In such circumstances, mechanisms that encourage dialogue between minorities and government play a particularly important role. Latvia already has several years of experience in this field.

The main state institution that for several years has dealt with minority issues is the Section on National Affairs. This body was created in 1991 as a permanent government department with a staff of thirteen. However, as a result of several reorganizations, it became subordinated to the Ministry of Justice with a staff of two. The section is mainly concerned with promoting co-operation between the government and minority cultural societies, especially the Latvian Association of National Cultural Societies, which unites 19 societies and/or unions of societies. The section distributes state subsidies for minority cultural events and also co-operates with foreign partners and organizations interested in ethnic relations.

At the end of the 1980s, a Department of Minority Schools was created within the Ministry of Education. This body played a key role in promoting the renewal of non-Russian minority schools. The reorganization of the ministry led to a decline in the status of this body and staff cuts. In 1994 the body was dissolved. The Education and Science Ministry now no longer has a separate section dealing with minority schools, but there is an official responsible for addressing the problems of minority schools.

In the summer of 1996 the President founded a Consultative Nationalities Council. This council is the most promising institution for promoting a permanent dialogue between minorities and government, but many issues remain unclear: the principles governing its composition, its terms of reference, its powers and impact on other state officials and institutions.

There are other state institutions whose work often affects minority interests — the Saeima Commission on Education, Culture and Science, the Commission on Human Rights and Social Affairs, the Latvian National Human Rights Office, the Radio and TV Council, the State Language Centre, the Steering Committee of the National Programme for Latvian Language Training, the Citizenship and Immigration Affairs Board and the Naturalization Board. Co-operation between all these organizations needs to be improved and particular attention should be paid to the recruitment of minority employees.

Although experience has been accumulated and important groundwork has been conducted in creating dialogue mechanisms, much remains to be done. Given the broad ideological spectrum of the ruling coalition of the 6th Saeima, it is not surprising that the government has encountered difficulties in formulating and implementing a unified minority policy. Most of the national minorities are also poorly organized or internally divided, which has hindered the clarification of views and exchange of opinions. Although much has been discussed and done, a culture of public debate on inter-ethnic issues and institutions that can successfully promote dialogue are still in their infancy.

July 1994, several months were needed to draft and adopt implementing regulations as well as to recruit the staff for the newly created Naturalization Board. Thus, naturalization really began only on 1 February 1995.

In 1995 approximately 60,000 persons were eligible to apply for extraordinary naturalization. In 1996 over 33,000 persons born in Latvia and aged between 16-20 became eligible, followed in 1997 by another 29,000 persons born in Latvia and aged up to 25 years. By the summer of 1997, some 124,000 non-citizens had the right to apply for naturalization.

Only a small number of those eligible to apply for naturalization under the provisions of the Citizenship Law have actually exercised that right and the majority of applicants have been persons over the age of 50. In the first year, to the end of January 1996, only slightly more than 1000 persons became Latvian citizens through naturalization. By the end of July 1996 the total number of persons naturalized was 2,459, by the end of January 1997 — 4,161 and by June 1997 — 5000 persons. In other words, less than 5% of eligible non-citizens have applied for citizenship and undergone naturalization.

The proportion of Latvian citizens has grown from 70.6% in 1995 to 72.0% this year. Only about 1/20 of the increase is attributable to naturalization; the remainder derives from the natural rate of increase among citizens and from the emigration of non-citizens. If this rate of naturalization persists, the number of non-citizens in five years time will still exceed 600,000 persons or 25% – 26% of the total population of Latvia.

The slow pace of naturalization has surprised almost everyone, the more so as most surveys had showed that the absolute majority of non-citizens desired Latvian citizenship. At the end of 1995 the Naturalization Board conducted a survey among the older non-citizen pupils in the schools of Riga Zemgale district. The results showed that 56% of those surveyed wished to obtain Latvian citizenship, 16% had no such desire and 28% had not thought about the issue.

Another of the Board's surveys in 18 town and regional schools where Russian is the language of instruction yielded similar results: 63% of young non-citizens wished to obtain Latvian citizenship, 11% did not, 24% hadn't thought about it and 2% gave no reply. However, the number of young people who have submitted applications for naturalization fell far short of the numbers indicated above.

The authorities have suggested various possible reasons for this phenomenon. Undoubtedly, during the first stage (1995), the 16 March 1995 amendments to the Citizenship Law which gave certain groups the right to citizenship by registration instead of through naturalization played a role. The amendments applied to Latvians and Livs, as well as to persons who had undergone a full course of general education in schools where Latvian was the language of instruction. When these amendments had been passed, 3,259 applications and 1,705 naturalization submissions were returned to the applicants because the amendments now gave them the opportunity to obtain citizenship by registration.

Changes in the law alone do not explain the lack of interest shown in naturalization. The results of studies by the Naturalization Board suggest that the major obstacles to more active naturalization might be the following:

- Inadequate knowledge of the Latvian language and history. In the surveys mentioned above, 26% of the pupils admitted that they did not know the history of Latvia or the Constitution, the same proportion thought that their knowledge of Latvian was inadequate. Only one in ten from this group reports being able to write and speak Latvian freely.

- Young male non-citizens do not wish to serve in the Latvian army; as opposed to their citi-

zen peers who must do military service, non-citizens can enrol in university immediately after secondary school.

- Non-citizens/USSR passport holders may travel to Russia without visas, as opposed to Latvian citizens who require visas.

- The high naturalization fee of 30 Ls (approximately US \$53). 11% of respondents in the above survey mentioned this reason.

- The lack of interest in obtaining Latvian citizenship, an inadequate valuation of political rights.

- The lack of information on the requirements of the law. This factor was mentioned by 14% of respondents.

There are, however, several circumstances which cast doubt on the above conclusions or at least suggest that other factors also contribute to the reluctance to apply for naturalization. For example, young women do not have to serve in the army and have not demonstrated great interest in undergoing naturalization. Moreover, USSR passports will soon become invalid. Therefore, these factors cannot be decisive in the slow pace of naturalization.

There is reason to believe that many non-citizens regard the proficiency levels required in the Latvian language and other examinations as too demanding, unnecessary and occasionally, unjust. For example, in the 1995 *Baltic Barometer* survey, among those non-Latvians who were not planning to apply for citizenship (25% of those surveyed), a third mentioned difficulties with the Latvian language as the reason for their reluctance. In response to the question in the 1996 *Baltic Barometer* survey "Should persons wishing to become citizens have to take an examination in the state language?" 9% of non-Latvians replied "definitely not", but some 30% thought it was "not necessary".

As concluded in the chapter on "Participation and Strengthening Civil Society" in last year's Report, society is becoming increasingly estranged from the state and public mistrust of state institutions is widespread. Citizens can express their dissatisfaction or alienation through the ballot box. It is possible that the low naturalization figures reflect the psychological estrangement of non-citizens from the state. Some observers also suggest that non-citizens feel cheated or offended when they have to actively affirm their belonging to Latvia. This does not mean that they feel an affiliation to some other country. It is estimated that only about 60,000 people have adopted citizenship of Russia and half this number has already emigrated to Russia. Surveys also show that non-citizens increasingly identify with Latvia.

Evidently there are many reasons for the slow pace of naturalization. It is to be hoped that a major research initiative entitled "On the Way to a Civil Society," to be carried out at the end of 1997 by the Naturalization Board in conjunction with other state institutions, international and non-governmental organizations, will provide clearer answers to this question. Focus groups and a large quantitative survey will ask both citizens and non-citizens about their attitudes towards citizenship, naturalization, integration and related issues. The results should provide a sound base for better public policy.

However, it is clear that there have to be additional initiatives directed towards the strengthening of non-citizens' knowledge of the Latvian language and Latvia's history, as well as increasing knowledge of the law's requirements. The mass media, particularly the Russian language media, have an important role in the dissemination of information and the stimulation of debate on naturalization issues.

As suggested on several occasions by President Ulmanis, serious consideration should be given to revising or abolishing altogether the naturalization "window system." Every non-citizen who can pass the examinations should be able to apply for citizenship without undue delay. After this step has been taken, the rate of naturalization could be reappraised and other amendments to the law considered. Although such an amendment and surveys of non-citizens are necessary, it is essential for the Latvian government to affirm its desire and ability to draft and consistently implement a policy for the integration of non-citizens in which the issue of naturalization would be of decisive significance.

The Status of Non-Citizens in Latvia

There will be a considerable number of non-citizens in Latvia for a long time to come. Thus, it is necessary to analyze in greater depth their circumstances and status in Latvia. In almost every country in the world there are certain differences between the rights and obligations of citizens and non-citizens. Usually, political rights — the right to work in public administration and the right to participate in elections to the country-wide legislature — are the prerogative of citizens. However, successful human development requires that non-citizen rights be guaranteed in other spheres, so that there are no basic obstacles to their socio-economic integration and their status is clear and stable.

The status of non-citizens was legally undefined until the law "On the Status of Those Citizens of the Former USSR Who Are Not Citizens

Box 3.2

Research on Ethnic Relations in Latvia

Research on ethnic issues in Latvia is generally conducted within poorly financed academically oriented projects. Several larger projects are currently under way with the financial support of the Latvian Science Council. Current topics include the history of ethnic groups and current relations, citizenship issues, the integration of school children into Latvian culture, the functional and socio-linguistic aspects of the Latvian language (total annual funding is 20,000 Ls).

Regardless of the low level of funding, several publications by scholars of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology have been issued in recent years on Latvia's ethnic situation. A large contribution to research on ethnic issues comes from data acquired by Latvian sociologists through participation in various international comparative projects, of which the most important are the *Baltic Barometer* and the *International Social Survey Programme* studies. Individual researchers working actively within the cultural societies and various NGOs have also published information and analytical materials on individual national minorities, citizenship and language policy and inter-ethnic relations.

However, this research can only offer very general conclusions. Many political decisions are currently being taken without analyzing implementation possibilities and consequences. There is a lack of specialized research furthering the solution of practical problems. Without such analytical research, it is impossible to design a workable strategy to encourage social integration.

of Latvia or Any Other Country" was passed on 12 April 1995. This was three-and-a-half years after the restoration of citizenship to those who had it before the war and their descendants. The undefined legal status of non-citizens during this time permitted certain state officials to interpret the status and rights of non-citizens according to their own political views. This resulted in a number of problems. Not only the defenders of non-citizen's rights and international organizations, but also the Judicial and Human Rights Commissions of the 5th Saeima found many violations in the work of officials of the Citizenship and Immigration Department in the process of registering inhabitants between 1992 and 1994.

One of the more acute problems was connected with non-citizens' travel documents. The Citizenship and Immigration Department required that non-citizens pay for the guarantee of the right to return without which they could not re-enter Latvia after travelling abroad. Moreover, at the beginning of 1995, stocks of USSR foreign passport

forms had run out and many persons found themselves without any travel documents whatsoever. To solve this problem, the Latvian government passed a resolution in the summer of 1995 to begin issuing temporary documents to non-citizens.

With the passing of the law "On the Status of Those Citizens of the Former USSR Who Are Not Citizens of Latvia or Any Other Country," the status of non-citizens was stabilized and their right to reside in Latvia was no longer in any doubt. Non-citizens were granted the right to freely leave and return to Latvia. The law also provided for the issue of special non-citizen passports which began in April 1997. Unfortunately, adoption of this law did not solve all problems, as implementation of several regulations required amendments to other laws. Regardless of the provision guaranteeing the right to freely leave and return to Latvia, the practice of demanding guarantees of the right to return was not rescinded. On the whole, however, the law "On the Status of Those Citizens of the Former USSR Who Are Not Citizens of Latvia or Any Other Country" clarified many issues.

Even before the Citizenship Law, several laws, government regulations and local government resolutions had been passed which differentiated between the rights of citizens and permanent resident non-citizens in several areas. These restricted non-citizens' land and property rights, the right to employment and work in certain professions and occupations (in both the state and private sectors as lawyers, pharmacists, firefighters, cabin crew on board Latvian registered aircraft etc.). They affected certain social rights (lower social pensions, limited opportunities to receive state and local authority assistance in solving housing problems and others), the opportunity for self-defence (firearms permits), the right to form religious organizations and others.

In recent years the number of restrictions on non-citizen rights has fallen. In some instances, this has been because certain laws passed at the beginning of the 1990s have now elapsed (for example the 1991 law on the privatization of the premises of small scale businesses and services which excluded non-citizens from the process). Other laws which are still in force have lost their practical meaning, such as the law on privatization certificates. Non-citizens received fewer certificates than citizens, but at the end of the issuing process this is practically impossible to remedy.

Other regulations have been reviewed, including the Customs Code (non-citizens are allowed to work in customs), the law on the privatization of co-operative housing (non-citizens have

the opportunity to buy privatized co-operative apartments), the law on state and local authority assistance in solving housing problems (these amendments gave non-citizens the same rights to assistance as citizens).

Some restrictions were partially lifted. The 1996 amendments to the law "On Religious Organizations" now permit non-citizens to establish religious congregations, but they are still precluded from being elected to the institutions of these congregations. From the beginning of 1996, the regulation limiting non-citizens to a social pension 90% of that received by citizens is no longer in force. Amendments to the Civil Service Law now permit those non-citizens who were already employed as state officials to remain in their posts, but non-citizens are still prevented from becoming civil servants.

It should also be noted that a series of legislative amendments on land ownership rights practically widened non-citizens' rights to own land both directly and through the use of company shares.

At the beginning of 1996, the Saeima Commission on Human Rights and Social Affairs requested the Latvian National Human Rights Office (LNHRO) to analyze the current restrictions on economic, social, employment and property ownership rights of non-citizens and to submit its conclusions on their compliance with Latvia's international obligations in the field of human rights. In its opinion of December 1996, the LNHRO concluded that ten restrictions run counter to the norms contained in the *International Covenant On Civil and Political Rights* which has been ratified by Latvia. These restrictions prevent non-citizens from working as firefighters, private detectives, armed security guards, aircraft cabin crew, pharmacy managers, sworn advocates and advocate's assistants. Also counter to international norms is the provision in the law "On Religious Organizations" which states that a non-citizen may not be a member of an elected body of a religious congregation.

After the publication of these conclusions, the "Fire Safety" law was amended and non-citizens gained the right to work as firefighters. Other amendments removing unjustified restrictions have still not yet been passed by the Saeima. These restrictions should be lifted as soon as possible if Latvia's legislation is not to contradict international human rights obligations. In addition, as outlined in the previous chapter, such employment restrictions serve only to further distort the labour market and will need to be lifted as Latvia continues to move towards integration not only into the EU, but also the WTO.

Language Policy, Education Reform and Social Integration

Language Policy and Promotion of the Latvian Language

As noted in **Latvia Human Development Report 1995**, “the acquisition of Latvian language skills will not only promote the integration of non-Latvians, but provide them the opportunity to participate fully in the political, social and economic life of the country... This will help overcome the linguistic segregation and asymmetric bi-lingualism created by Soviet language policy and promote ethnic harmony, which is an essential precondition for future human development.” Considering the vital role played by the Latvian language in social integration, it is necessary to examine more closely language policy, achievements in the realm of promoting Latvian, the linguistic behaviour of the population and the major obstacles to more rapid development.

Six years after the restoration of independence there seems to be a growing consensus among Latvian politicians and in society, among non-Latvians and Latvians alike, that knowledge of Latvian is a core precondition for integration into Latvia's society. Nevertheless, in recent years different interpretations have started to crystallize on the wider use of the Latvian language and the pace and strategy to be employed to secure its future. Although an exchange of ideas on the issue among various institutions and social groups has begun and recently there even seems to be a convergence of opinions, it is still too early to say there is a unified state language policy.

In Latvia there is a range of institutions whose work encompasses various aspects of language policy issues — the Saeima Education, Culture and Science Commission, the State Language Centre, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Naturalization Board, the Latvian Language Unit for the Implementation of the National Programme for Latvian Language Training, the Radio and Television Council etc. Although they all have a common aim — the promotion of Latvian language proficiency and the strengthening of all its socio-linguistic functions, a lack of co-ordination and differing approaches hinder the implementation of a balanced and realistic language policy. Such a policy should define the results it aims to achieve, the rules during the transition period and the methods for achieving the required results. The Steering Committee established to supervise the National Programme for Latvian Language Training could lay the foundation for such a unified and balanced language policy.

Since the restoration of independence there has been a serious change in attitudes among non-Latvians towards the Latvian language. A 1997 survey carried out under the auspices of the National Programme for Latvian Language Training asked “In your opinion, how important is it for people living in Latvia to have a good command of the Latvian language?” 92% of Russians and other minorities said “very or quite important”. Compared to the 1989 census, when only 23% of non-Latvians could speak Latvian, the number of Latvian speakers among non-Latvians has grown considerably. Although there are no official statistics on language proficiency, several 1996 and 1997 surveys put the number of Latvian language speakers among non-Latvians from 36% to 53%. The intensified introduction of Latvian in the education system and employees' language certification have left a mark on the language proficiency of different age groups. Knowledge of Latvian is greater in the younger age groups and significantly decreases after the age of 65. Generally speaking though, Latvia's linguistic context is still marked by a high level of bi-lingualism of Latvians and significant monolingualism of non-Latvians.

The number of children attending schools where Latvian is the language of instruction is increasing (see Table 3.2 and Figure 3.3). According to the Central Statistical Bureau, on 1 September 1996, 68.9% of all children in pre-school education attended Latvian groups, but 30.6% attended Russian groups. In Riga, 50.6 per cent of children attended Latvian groups. In the 1995-1996 academic year, 85% of students in state financed higher education were taught in Latvian and 15% in Russian.

The Latvian language has consolidated its position in public administration. However, as a consequence of the Soviet ethnic division of economic labour, in some sectors — transport, police and prisons — Russian still plays an important role. Similarly, Russian is still widely used in sectors where the role of the state is lessening but where, in Soviet times, non-Latvians were dominant — trade, large scale enterprises. The introduction of Latvian in the private sector has been fraught with difficulties. Although knowledge of Latvian is necessary in most professions, communication in Latvian is not always possible. According to State Language Inspectorate figures, 80% of the complaints received have been about the non-use of Latvian.

Measures aimed at promoting Latvian are not always balanced with real possibilities. In October 1996 the Cabinet of Ministers passed regulations according to which qualifying for the status of unemployed requires a Latvian language proficiency certificate. These regulations unfavourably

affect the socio-economic interests of many. Over the last three years, the job opportunities of about every third non-Latvian unemployed person were limited by an inadequate knowledge of Latvian. As noted in the next chapter, unemployment is particularly high in Latgale, an area where non-Latvians have traditionally lived in great numbers. Moreover, the State Employment Service does not finance language courses for the unemployed.

These regulations negatively affect a marginal social group — former prisoners — who face special obstacles in social integration at the best of times. Upon their release, many ex-prisoners rely on unemployment benefits before they are able to find work and fully return into society. According to Prison Administration data, in March 1997 of approximately 6,100 convicted persons, 2,700 needed Latvian language courses and certification. Without knowledge of Latvian and the appropriate documents, former prisoners cannot claim unemployment benefits. Such circumstances serve only to encourage recidivism. Several foreign organizations have become involved in arranging courses to encourage Latvian language learning in prisons, but this is not a long-term solution.

Latvian language learning is still connected with a range of obstacles and difficulties. One of the main difficulties cited by non-Latvians who do not speak Latvian is that they do not have the opportunity to use the language in practice. Success-

ful learning is also hindered by the myths and stereotypes about the language learning abilities of various ethnic groups and the difficulty and complexity of the Latvian language. However, linguistic integration is not a one-way street. The attitude and behaviour of Latvians, or Latvian speakers to be more precise, is critical. This issue has not been adequately studied in Latvia up to now. The most comprehensive research to date on this subject is the 1996 socio-linguistic study by the Latvian Language Institute (LLI) "The Linguistic Competence of Latvians and an Evaluation of Language Processes." Though some questions have been included in recent surveys on the attitudes of Latvians towards language policy, such surveys need to be carried out on a regular basis and should be financed by the state.

The LLI survey confirms the contradictory attitude of Latvians and their interpretation of their role in the promotion of Latvian. Although the Latvian language has a high place in the scale of values, there is noticeable passivity in the use of Latvian when communicating with non-Latvians. When asked the question, "Do you speak Latvian to non-Latvians who can speak Latvian?" only about one half of Latvians answered in the affirmative. Although this attitude lessens linguistic tension between ethnic groups, it also threatens social integration on the basis of the Latvian language. It has sometimes been noted that many Latvians are

Table 3.2

Number of Students by Language of Instruction and Grade, 1990-1996

Year	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
1990	Latvian	22,489	20,102	18,380	15,602	15,844	16,351	16,614	16,374	16,119	6,045	6,089	6,045	176,054
	Russian	19,020	17,041	16,583	9,789	16,179	16,324	16,763	15,693	15,149	5,983	6,256	132	154,912
	Other	51	36											87
	Total	41,560	37,179	34,963	25,391	32,023	32,675	33,377	32,067	31,268	12,028	12,345	6,177	331,053
	Latv. %	54.1	54.1	52.6	61.4	49.5	50.0	49.8	51.1	51.6	50.3	49.3	97.9	53.2
1992	Latvian	16,992	20,166	20,934	18,991	18,083	17,261	15,773	15,696	15,515	6,490	5,311	5,301	176,513
	Russian	14,199	16,172	17,180	8,508	16,438	15,963	15,106	14,806	14,350	5,801	4,464	353	143,340
	Other	122	111	47	42									322
	Total	31,313	36,449	38,161	27,541	34,521	33,224	30,879	30,502	29,865	12,291	9,775	5,654	320,175
	Latv. %	54.3	55.3	54.9	69.0	52.4	52.0	51.1	51.5	52.0	52.8	54.3	93.8	55.1
1995	Latvian	24,492	22,852	20,494	16,135	19,650	20,360	19,389	17,345	15,620	8,166	6,789	6,306	197,598
	Russian	12,454	13,209	13,079	11,662	8,147	13,530	14,815	13,556	12,335	5,833	5,104	4,706	128,430
	Other	327	301	254	160	173	80	97	55	22	30	22	18	1539
	Total	37,273	36,362	33,827	27,957	27,970	33,970	34,301	30,956	27,977	14,029	11,915	11,030	327,567
	Latv. %	65.7	62.8	60.6	57.7	70.3	59.9	56.5	56.0	55.8	58.2	57.0	57.2	60.3
1996	Latvian	25,188	23,881	23,503	21,016	16,694	20,105	20,638	19,438	16,864	8,990	7,409	6,659	210,385
	Russian	11,759	12,423	13,344	13,005	11,849	8,344	13,509	14,418	12,812	6,330	5,216	4,775	127,784
	Other	276	299	272	227	150	153	81	93	51	19	23	20	1664
	Total	37,223	36,603	37,119	34,248	28,693	28,602	34,228	33,949	29,727	15,339	12,648	11,454	339,833
	Latv. %	67.7	65.2	63.3	61.4	58.2	70.3	60.3	57.3	56.7	58.6	58.6	58.1	61.9

reluctant to accept within their midst those who wish and are prepared to integrate linguistically. Moreover, many Latvians tend to rely on state institutions to monitor the use of Latvian, but pay insufficient attention to the importance of their own initiative in choosing the language of communication. As stressed in **Latvia Human Development Report 1996**, successful human development requires that civil society take the initiative as the state retreats from its former position as all-encompassing regulator of social life.

As the young Latvian generation turns increasingly to the mastery of foreign languages, Latvian linguistic activity will increase. Statistics show that since 1993, when Russian was given the same status as English, German and French in schools where Latvian is the language of instruction, the number of pupils choosing English instead of Russian has increased rapidly. The position of the English language will become stronger, while that of Russian will weaken in the future because, as of the academic year 1998-99, English will be the first and thus, compulsory foreign language.

Language Policy in Education

The education system has the most important role in ensuring the acquisition of Latvian and promoting integration. The democratic harmonization of the interests and activities of all the parties involved in the education system (state institutions, minority schools, pupils and parents) is an important precondition for both individual development and human development more broadly. As the chapter on "Education Reform" in the 1996 **Report** emphasizes, "From a human development perspective, it is regrettable that minorities have not been able to participate more fully in the reform process."

The importance of involving minorities in a dialogue and eliciting their participation has only grown over the last year, as a number of controversial measures increasing the role of the Latvian language in minority schools have been implemented or contemplated. According to the provisions of a draft Law on Education, state funded minority secondary schools (grades 10-12) were to switch over to instruction in the Latvian language by 2005. At the same time, the Saeima passed amendments to the old education law introducing Latvian as the language of instruction for 2-3 subjects beginning 1 September 1996. A directive issued by the Minister of Education and Science in December 1996 envisages Latvian language certification at the highest level for education workers in minority schools, regardless of the level of

Latvian actually required for the fulfilment of their professional duties.

While some measures reflect the effort to introduce Latvian rapidly, others represent a more gradualist approach. In 1996 the Cabinet of Ministers approved the National Programme for Latvian Language Training, according to which in 10 years' time minority schools could make a smooth transition to a situation in which 10% of school subjects in the 1st grade are taught in Latvian, gradually increasing across grades until 50% of subjects are taught in Latvian by grades 8 and 9. The viability of different approaches and their conformity to both state and minority interests is becoming clearer.

The rapid introduction of subject teaching in Latvian without an adequate period for preparation leads to the gradual exclusion of Russian teachers from the job market and their replacement by Latvian teachers. Both state institutions and some educational establishments have occasionally over-emphasized quantitative indicators, which often give a misleading impression of rapid achievements in Latvian language introduction and distort perceptions of the language situation on the ground. At the same time, reality has been conducive to the emergence of a more pragmatic, gradual approach by state education institutions in lieu of the originally planned radical changes. Thus, in the new draft bill "On the State Language" the intended changeover to Latvian in state funded minority secondary education by the year 2005 no longer appears. But it is envisaged that "in state and municipal funded general education schools, at least half the subjects should be taught in the state language." Minority school teachers have been given a longer time to prepare for Latvian language certification. However, the realization that improvements in the language situation require long-term solutions is dawning only slowly.

On 6 December 1996 the Latvian government signed a project with the UNDP for US\$ 3.2 million in international assistance to support the implementation of the first two years of the National Programme for Latvian Language Training (see **Latvia Human Development Report 1996**). In addition to UNDP, funding also comes from the Governments of Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, as well as from the European Commission. Assistance with teaching materials is also provided by the United Kingdom's *Know-How Fund*.

With the active participation of teachers, in a year's time this programme has prepared Latvian language teaching books for the eighth and ninth grades in minority schools and a handbook for

Box 3.3

Ethnic Aspects of the Economy

The lack of reliable statistics precludes definitive conclusions about the distribution of economic power by ethnicity, language or citizenship. Clearly, since the collation of data in the 1989 census on the ethnic division of labour in the national economy, the structure of employment has changed significantly. The main sources of information on the subject are the Central Statistical Bureau's studies on household budgets and various sociological surveys.

As mentioned in the Chapter 2, poverty has become a serious social problem affecting a significant sector of the population regardless of ethnicity. Household budget studies from the second half of 1996 show that inequality is more pronounced among Russians than among Latvians. Comparing the per capita incomes of all Russian households with those of all Latvian households, experts have concluded that poor Russian households outnumber poor Latvian households by 5 - 10%. This may largely be explained with reference to the fact that Latvian households more often earn income from household plots.

The November 1996 *Baltic Barometer* survey results also suggest that non-Latvians are over-represented among the poor.

When asked if their households had to do without sufficient food sometime during the last year, 30% of non-Latvians and 18% of Latvians replied "often". Though official statistics show that unemployment among non-Latvians is only slightly higher than their share of the workforce, the findings of the *Baltic Barometer* survey suggest a significant level of hidden unemployment that has particularly affected non-Latvians. When asked "Have you been unemployed at any time in the last half year?", 26% of non-Latvians answered in the affirmative as compared to 14% of Latvians.

Sociological surveys also reveal that significantly more non-Latvians than Latvians are employed in private enterprise — the best paid sector. This can be attributed primarily to the concentration of non-Latvians in cities and the consequences of the Soviet ethnic division of economic labour. However, surveys also show that the share of Latvians and women in private enterprise increased markedly between 1993 and 1996.

When asked in the *Baltic Barometer* survey if they expected fair treatment from employers and various state and local government institutions, non-Latvians and Latvians provided very similar responses.

teachers of Latvian as a second language (LAT2). A 30-person strong minority school LAT2 teacher-training group has been formed which will begin retraining colleagues all over Latvia in the autumn of 1997. Another 10 teacher trainers will provide further instruction for LAT2 teachers of adults. During the year 20 groups of minority school teachers and directors have completed Latvian language courses. Work is continuing on the promotion of Latvian language learning with the aid of the mass media and television in particular. It is not only non-Latvians or non-citizens who lack Latvian language skills. The programme has also begun intensive Latvian language courses for a specific group of citizens, some of whom are Latvians — young men serving in the army.

Thus, far, the programme has attracted the widest minority participation in addressing urgent education problems — approximately one-third of those involved in programme activities during the first year were minorities. The programme could encourage educators from minority (especially Russian) schools to enter into a more active dialogue with state education authorities to make implementation of the National Programme as smooth as possible. A more rapid pace of reform will also encourage more active participation from Russian school administrators in programme activities.

Success in the promotion of Latvian language

training cannot be achieved without the involvement of Latvian schools in the process. Until now the programme has faced difficulties in establishing co-operation between Latvian and Russian language based schools. It may be possible to initiate such co-operation within dual language schools.

The National Programme for Latvian Language Training has emphasized the retraining of current LAT2 teachers, but the issue of training new LAT2 teachers still needs to be addressed. As it is a low prestige speciality and potential students are rare, several institutes of higher education have stopped training new specialists. The training of new teachers should become a priority in the near future because the average age of teachers of Latvian, like that of teachers more generally, is increasing over time.

Trends in Russian and Other Minority Schools

A large number of non-Latvians attend Russian and other minority schools. These schools play an important part not only in strengthening the cultural identity of minority children, but also in their integration into society. By implementing the National Programme for Latvian Language Training, these schools will be able to secure a good grounding in Latvian, which is the basis for integration. At the same time though, as these schools teach

the Latvian language and culture, it is important to take into account the psychology and mentality of the children and to avoid threatening their identity. Thus, it is necessary to analyze not only progress in promoting Latvian in these schools, but also the uniqueness and specific development of these schools.

Despite the enormous tasks faced by Russian schools in facilitating integration and strengthening the cultural identity of children, until quite recently, there was virtually no discussion at the state level on the situation in Russian schools and possible models for their development. Moreover, the issue has become quite politicized. Because Russian schools have ethnically diverse student bodies and specific curricula, some state officials equate them with the old Soviet schools that promoted the linguistic and cultural Russification of non-Russians. For this reason Russian schools are often not considered minority schools, but schools with Russian as the language of instruction. Some officials would like to see these schools develop along the lines of non-Russian minority schools, where great emphasis is put on encouraging awareness of ethnic identity. The current exchange of opinions on Russian schools is taking place against a background of contradictory claims which, one hopes, will develop into a constructive dialogue over time.

Last year's **Report** analyzed Latvia's inheritance from Soviet times of two school sub-systems — Latvian and Russian. Latvian schools or schools with Latvian as the language of instruction were and still are mainly attended by Latvian children, but Russian language schools are attended by all the other ethnicities (see Table 3.3). Statistics from the last two school years show that approximately 7% of Latvian children are still being taught in Russian. The proportion of Russian children in

Latvian schools however, is smaller, but increasing (4.6% in 1995 to 5.7% in 1996). Of the other non-Russian minorities only Roma (67%) and Lithuanian (55%) children mainly attend Latvian schools. Among Belorussians and Ukrainians, only about one in ten attends a Latvian school. The majority of these children attend Russian schools.

Before the "Awakening" of the late 1980s, there were no schools for the non-Russian minorities. Then, the situation changed somewhat, as several non-Russian minority schools were founded and non-Russian minority children gained the opportunity to learn their national language and culture. Today Latvia has 6 Polish, 1 Jewish, 1 Lithuanian, 1 Estonian, 1 Ukrainian school and classes for Belorussians, Lithuanians and Roma. The relevant minority language is not always fully used as the language of instruction. Some of these schools (e.g. Lithuanian and Estonian schools) employ Latvian as the basic language, while others (e.g. the Jewish school) use Russian.

In recent years the founding of new minority schools has stopped, not because of any legislative obstacles, but because of the lack of demand. Only Poles can speak of a renewal of a network of schools in Latvia. Other non-Russian minority schools are mainly concentrated in Riga. Of all non-Russian minority children, approximately 5% or just over 1600 attended the school of their ethnicity; over 80% still choose Russian schools. This fact should not necessarily be interpreted as the continuation of Soviet Russification policy, because for many of the pupils, Russian is their native language.

The number of mixed marriages, especially among the non-Russian minorities, must also be taken into account. In 1995 approximately 90% of all Belorussians, Ukrainians, Poles and Lithuanians who married chose partners from a different eth-

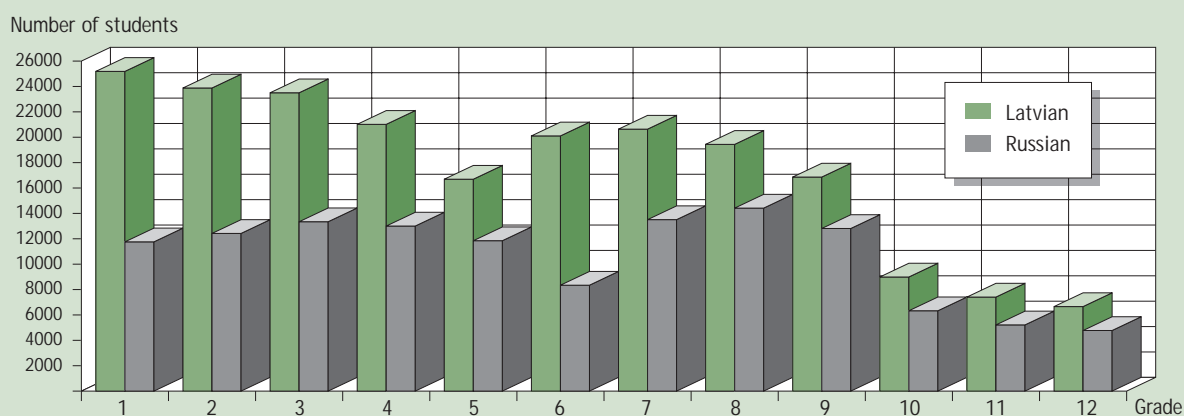
Table 3.3

Distribution of Schoolchildren by Ethnicity and Language of Instruction, 1995-96 and 1996-97

Ethnicity	Number of students		Latvian language of instruction				Russian language of instruction				Other languages of instruction			
	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996
Latvians	209,192	215,790	194,260	200,594	92.9%	93.0%	14790	15001	7.1%	7.0%	142	195	0.1%	0.1%
Russians	100,204	98181	4642	5611	4.6%	5.7%	95460	92422	95.3%	94.1%	102	148	0.1%	0.2%
Belorussians	7581	7510	574	738	7.6%	9.8%	6968	6732	91.9%	89.6%	39	40	0.5%	0.5%
Ukrainians	5865	5576	413	491	7.0%	8.8%	5312	4927	90.6%	88.4%	140	158	2.4%	2.8%
Poles	5268	5527	525	629	10.0%	11.4%	4140	4294	78.6%	77.7%	603	604	11.4%	10.9%
Lithuanians	2449	2642	1314	1456	53.7%	55.1%	1056	1090	43.1%	41.3%	79	96	3.2%	3.6%
Jews	1279	1074	39	25	3.0%	2.3%	849	691	66.4%	64.3%	391	358	30.6%	33.3%
Estonians	194	184	65	51	33.5%	27.7%	116	116	59.8%	63.0%	13	17	6.7%	9.2%
Roma	719	809	425	500	59.1%	61.8%	267	263	37.1%	32.5%	27	46	3.8%	5.7%
Others	2582	2541	283	290	11.0%	11.4%	2296	2249	88.9%	88.5%	3	2	0.1%	0.1%
Total	335,333	339,834	202,540	210,385	60.4%	61.9%	131,254	127,785	39.1%	37.6%	1539	1664	0.5%	0.5%

Figure 3.3

Distribution of Students by Language of Instruction and Grade, 1996-1997 School Year



nic group. For many, Russian is a native language. According to Population Register data, Russian is the language in the home for 84% of Ukrainians and Belarussians, the largest minorities after Russians. For this reason these minorities often choose Russian schools for their children.

Regardless of current shortcomings, Russian schools in Latvia have qualities that are attractive to many parents and children. Russian schools in Latvia have fine traditions which predate 1945. The Alexander and Lomonosov grammar schools were famous and very popular not just among Russians, but also among Latvians in pre-war Latvia. The specific character of Russian schools derives from their basis in Russian culture. This is manifested primarily in a cycle of Russian subjects, especially the Russian literature course. Russian schools enable the preservation and passing down to future generations of the Russian cultural heritage in Latvia, which is an integral part of the richness of Latvia's culture. The orientation towards Russian culture and language determines the national character of Russian schools and, notwithstanding the diverse student bodies, suggests that they should not just be regarded as "schools with Russian as the language of instruction," but also as "Russian schools."

The 1996 **Report** analyzed the difficulties faced by all schools in Latvia because of inadequate funding, rapid changes in the curriculum and changes in the age structure and educational attainment of teachers. As noted in the previous section, alongside all the other problems they face, administrators and teachers in Russian schools had only a relatively short time to learn the Latvian language and change their stance towards the Latvian language as a subject and its place in the school curriculum.

The growing demand for high quality Latvian language teaching and education as a whole, as well as not infrequent feelings of insecurity about the future have sharpened the competition between Russian schools and made them seek their own particular niches. The seemingly homogenous character of Russian schools is changing under the new conditions. Co-operation with universities (Riga Secondary School No. 76 and Riga Technical University, the Pushkin Lyceum with the University of Latvia), the readiness to introduce experimental programmes (Secondary School No. 22 and the "Eksperiments" school) and efforts to reintroduce the traditions of Russian schools in pre-war Latvia (Secondary School No. 23, now the Lomonosov Grammar School) reflect the growing diversity of Russian schools. Many schools are paying greater attention to Russian folklore and traditions, some are looking for ties with the Orthodox church. An interesting model is the Kraslava "Rainbow" school where the emphasis is on multicultural education.

The content of subjects being taught is changing, though it is in line with national standards. In the Russian cultural cycle, subjects are now taught which were earlier forbidden or not available (early 20th century poetry, Russian émigré literature, the works of Akhmatova, Tsvetayeva, Bulgakov and other authors). Many concepts and phenomena are being rediscovered, for example, the attitudes of Russian cultural figures towards religion, revolution and social movements. The concept of homeland has also changed. Whereas previously, this meant the whole wide Soviet Union, for almost all children it now means Latvia or a specific place in Latvia. This is attested to by the results of an essay competition "Where does the Homeland begin?"

organized by the newspaper *SM*. Only one child wrote about Russia. Social science courses increasingly take an inter-cultural approach, examining the place of Russian and Latvian culture in the context of world culture.

Clearly, both the state and the general public have a common interest in ensuring that graduating secondary students are proficient in Latvian, competitive in the labour market and integrated into society. The search for the optimal means to achieve these goals could become a factor which unites and consolidates Latvian society. The problems of Russian schools and other issues affecting minorities should be solved through dialogue. Possible means for institutionalizing dialogue and harnessing it to promote national integration and social cohesion are suggested below in the recommendations.

The Socio-Political and International Contexts and National Integration

Notwithstanding the difficulties related to citizenship and language policy and the many other contentious issues that have surfaced since the restoration of independence, Latvia has enjoyed remarkable social, political and ethnic stability. This is attested to by the non-violent end of communist power, the withdrawal of the Russian army, the restoration of the Constitution, consistent land and property reforms, a stable monetary policy and more. Although there has been a small degree of tension in ethnic relations, here, too, non-violent conflict resolution has been the norm. The paradox is that these processes have taken place against a backdrop of severe economic stratification, political alienation and a very high level of civic dissatisfaction. Therefore, it is important to discern not only socially divisive factors, but also those fostering integration, the more so as their absence would preclude sustainable human development and ethnic harmony.

The 1996 **Report** concluded that public par-

ticipation in the political process has fallen significantly since the restoration of independence. Although this has hindered human development, low levels of participation and weak political identification have also mitigated the tension of possible confrontation in ethnic relations. Popular distrust of the elite and political parties has been so great that even under conditions of a profound economic transformation, the opposition could not mobilize the public to protest. However paradoxical it may sound, alienation, be it among Latvians or minorities, became a socially stabilizing factor. According to survey data, the prevailing view among both Latvians and minorities is that the people cannot influence the government.

The possibility of ethnic confrontation was also reduced by disunity within ethnic groups. As mentioned earlier, minorities are very fragmented and are differentiated by citizenship status, Latvian language proficiency, knowledge of the minority language etc. Moreover, mixed marriages are very common. This diversity was compounded not only by economic stratification, but also by "political stratification," which affected Latvians as well. Sociological surveys show that, over the last five years, there has practically not been a single issue on which the differences between Latvians and other ethnic groups have widened. There are still considerable differences between Latvian and non-Latvian evaluations of the Soviet regime or contemporary Russia. But attitudes towards the current regime and the future prospects of Latvia are less divergent.

Judging from survey results, the majority of the population of Latvia (both Latvians and non-Latvians) does not regard ethnic relations as a particularly acute problem where there is a danger of excesses. Since 1993 the number of people who think that ethnic relations are "all right, we can handle whatever problems arise" has grown significantly (see Table 3.4). This is a sound foundation for further human development, though the future actions of Government, Parliament, NGOs and Latvia's for-

Table 3.4

How Would you Describe the Relations Between the National and Ethnic Groups in Latvia? (%)

	September-October 1993		April 1995		November 1996	
	Latvians	Others	Latvians	Others	Latvians	Others
No problems	1	3	2	4	2	4
All right, we can handle whatever problems arise	61	59	62	68	72	72
Not so good, difficulties	21	19	30	23	22	21
Bad	1	3	2	1	3	2

eign partners will be essential in strengthening national integration and social cohesion.

Another stabilizing factor has been the active involvement of the international community in the promotion of integration. Notwithstanding the fact that minority policy has often been declarative and contradictory, all the successive governments of post-independence Latvia have consistently supported the involvement of the international community in addressing problems relating to the rights of national minorities. Since 1993 there has been an OSCE Mission in Latvia monitoring citizenship related issues. Several governments have worked closely with UNDP and have implemented two important initiatives — the establishment of the Latvian National Human Rights Office and the design and now implementation of the National Programme for Latvian Language Training. The OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities and the Council of the Baltic Sea States Commissioner for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights are regular visitors to Latvia. Regardless of the complicated ethnic and linguistic situation, this confirms Latvia's readiness and desire to solve the aforementioned problems according to European standards.

Recommendations for Promoting National Integration and Social Cohesion

All the preconditions for strengthening national integration and social cohesion already exist in Latvia: powerful traditions of non-violent conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence have evolved, the opinions of Latvians and non-Latvians have converged on almost all issues (including the necessity of knowing the Latvian language), a long term programme to promote Latvian language learning has been adopted, essential laws regulating naturalization and the status of non-citizens have been passed and important groundwork has been done towards initiating a dialogue between government and national minorities.

However, thus far harmony has often rested on the passivity and political alienation of the public — factors that hinder overall human development. It is important to remove possible sources of tension, so that increased participation encourages integration and social cohesion. As Latvia enters European structures and assumes important international obligations, it is necessary to remedy shortcomings in legislation affecting national minorities and non-citizens and to harmonize Latvia's laws and administrative practice with European

standards. At the same time, a long-term policy to promote national integration needs to be elaborated, a policy which might include the following elements.

Until there has been more detailed research on the true reasons for the passivity of non-citizens, there is no basis for a radical review of the main requirements of the Citizenship Law. However, it is urgent to halt any further enlargement of the already large body of non-citizens with new non-citizens — children born in independent Latvia whose parents are both non-citizens. Humanitarian considerations as well as Latvia's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments dictate that the government should grant citizenship to all children born in Latvia after the restoration of independence. It should be noted that the number of children involved is not enormous (about 15,000). Moreover, a child born in 1991 will only be eligible to vote in the year 2009, by which time he or she should be fully integrated into Latvian society.

Considering the slow pace of naturalization, the schedule or "window system" that stretches the process out to 2003 is increasingly difficult to justify. This conclusion can also be found in the European Commission's Opinion on Latvia's readiness to join the European Union. Forced to wait a long time for their turn in the naturalization process, non-citizens become estranged from the state and lose the motivation to take the necessary steps to integrate politically into society. The *Baltic Barometer* survey results show that the share of persons without citizenship who definitely plan to apply for naturalization is constantly falling — from 38% in April 1995 to 19% in November 1996. The timetable does not have to be completely abandoned immediately; it could be sped up. For example, all non-citizens born in Latvia should be allowed to apply for naturalization in 1998 and all those born outside Latvia should be allowed to apply in 1999.

Along with these minor adjustments to the Citizenship Law, public discussion should be encouraged on the readiness of citizens and non-citizens to integrate. It is especially important to encourage discussion on naturalization among non-citizen youth. Special broadcasts on Russian language television and radio should be considered, as should the organization of special events in Russian and other minority schools aimed at familiarizing non-citizen youth with the requirements of the Citizenship Law, explaining the advantages of citizenship etc. A good venue for discussion of citizenship-related issues would be the civics course, which is obligatory for all in the ninth grade.

Human development and national integration require guaranteeing equal socio-economic opportunities for all. The Latvian National Human Rights Office found that a number of restrictions on non-citizen employment opportunities contradict Latvia's international human rights obligations. At the same time, the European Commission Opinion mentioned above also pointed out that Latvia should "make the effort to ensure equal rights for non-citizens and minorities, especially in employment positions and participation in the democratic process." By abolishing unnecessary restrictions on non-citizen employment, Latvia would be promoting human development, ensuring compliance with international human rights standards and taking a significant step towards the European Union. The same holds true in the case of Cabinet regulations stipulating the requirement of Latvian language proficiency for receiving unemployment benefits. As mentioned earlier, these regulations should be rescinded, as they hinder the socio-economic integration of the unemployed and may promote recidivism.

A review of the mandatory ethnicity entry in passports is also necessary. A passport is a person's primary identity document in Latvia and the ethnicity entry forces people to stress their ethnicity at an official level. This entry constitutes the state's administrative interference in the definition of individual identity, which is a deeply private matter. Most importantly, the ethnicity entry opens the door to possible discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity. As a first step, Latvia could follow Lithuania's example, where the ethnicity entry is voluntary or follow Estonia in abolishing the ethnicity entry altogether.

Although several significant steps have been taken to strengthen the legal status of the Latvian language in the post-independence period, the actual use of the state language in various fields has not kept pace. In the future, any legislative measures to secure the status of the Latvian language should be carefully considered, weighing up the real possibilities and taking into account international human rights standards. A considerable number of the changes in language legislation were made at a time when the state dominated the economy and it could freely regulate language use in the workplace. As private enterprise develops, the state's role in language regulation in this sphere is diminishing. Although international standards on the use of language in the economic sphere have not been fully developed, Latvia's language policy must find the proper balance between those occasions where a requirement to use the state language corresponds to the vital interests of society and

those where it begins to infringe upon the individual's freedom of speech.

When commissioning the design of the National Programme for Latvian Language Training, the government did not envisage a special sub-programme for Latgale. However, the language situation and the demand for language training has demonstrated the need for an expanded and more detailed programme for that region. At the same time, consideration should be given to the creation of a special Latvian language sub-programme for a specific target audience — people in closed institutions (prisons, mental hospitals, children's shelters etc.) whose reintegration into society is problematic.

Although limited resources have been allocated for various scientific studies on ethnopolitical and integration issues by Latvia's Science Council, the importance of these issues requires more substantial investments. Without a solid base of data and serious scientific research, successful government policy in the realm of national integration and social cohesion more generally will be considerably handicapped. The results of studies should be publicized more widely, otherwise they become the province of a narrow circle of specialists.

It is not only important to promote dialogue between researchers, government and the broader public, but also between the government and national minorities. Legislative changes affecting minorities should be discussed with minorities, and the views of the Consultative Nationalities Council should also be considered. In order to realize the human development principle of participation and find solutions to the organizational and curriculum problems of minority schools more successfully, a special minority schools section with staff including minorities should again be established within the Ministry of Education and Science.

The institutions where a dialogue is already taking place, particularly the President's Consultative Nationalities Council, should receive all possible support. To increase its influence on public policy, the Nationalities Council may need to establish a permanent secretariat with research, legislation drafting and public outreach capacities. Other state institutions that deal with minorities (e.g. the National Affairs Section of the Ministry of Justice and the Latvian National Human Rights Office) also require support. Dialogue gives national minorities the opportunity to air their concerns and grievances and gives government the opportunity to explain current policy and future possibilities. Dialogue can ease mistrust and encourage success in the quest for common interests and values, which is the quintessence of national integration and social cohesion.